Voyageur Memorial School

REPORT ON COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY

March 4, 2019

Summary

On February 27th, 2019, the Cree Nation of Mistissini received a wake-up call when a video of a student assaulting a teacher went viral on social media. This report will not provide details about the incident that took place at Voyageur Memorial High School as this was not the first act of violence that occurred, however it was the first to be recorded. This report will show a timeline of planning sessions and assemblies that took place after the event occurred.

MARCH 1ST, 2019

It was suggested by the Principal, Betty Anne Forward, and supported by the School Operations Department at Cree School Board, that classes be cancelled on March 1st, 2019 so that teachers and staff could have a planning session on how to deal with the current state of the school. Led by the CEA, Andy Baribeau and Principal, Betty Anne Forward, teachers, staff, and key supporters brainstormed on how they could plan an assembly with students, teachers, staff and parents. Teachers and staff shared their concerns about the state of the school. After a list of 20 developed, they then grouped each of these issues and came up with four themes: Student-Teacher Relationships, Social Media and Cellphones, Bullying, and Acceptance and Outlets of Expression. This would be the topic headings for the student activity and community assembly.

MARCH 4TH, 2019 AM

On the morning of March 4th, students returned to school and were paired with another class and 2-3 adults (teachers and educators), to participate in an activity where open-discussions on the four topics took place. For each question, students were invited to share either orally or by writing on a sticky note their thoughts on each topic (see Appendix A). Four guided questions were given for each topic to help get the discussions started. The questions were: What is your experience with this? What do you want to change? What can I do? What can others do? The majority of the students participated in this activity and those who did not want to were invited to one of three safe haven rooms located on each floor of the high school. The safe haven room was supervised by teachers and it gave students a chance to relax, talk to someone or just work on their school work. Once the activity was over, teachers took chart papers and sticky notes that the students wrote on into the gymnasium and displayed them throughout the gym. There was a debriefing and then some teachers and staff prepared for the afternoon assembly.

MARCH 4TH, 2019 PM

At 1:00, students, teachers, staff, parents, community members were invited to attend a community assembly led by CEA, Andy Baribeau. Opening remarks were given by CEA Andy Baribeau, Chief Thomas Neeposh, CSB Chairperson Sarah Pash, Elementary School Principal Rebecca Tolley, and High School Principal Betty Anne Forward. The assembly soon turned into a world café discussion led by 8 different faciltators; 2 for each topic of discussion. Facilitators gave guided questions for each topic and facilitators also took notes as people spoke (see Appendix B). After 15 minutes of discussion, community members moved to a new group. Each community member was given the opportunity to share in a discussion on the topics of: Student-Teacher Relationships, Social Media and Cellphones, Bullying, and Acceptance and Outlets of Expression.

MARCH 5TH, 2019

Throughout the week of March 4th, Line Melanson, a Registered Psychotherapist/Field Traumatologist from the Employee and Family Assistance Program was on-site to speak with teachers and staff who needed support. Line also attended the Community Assembly and the debriefing with teachers and staff the following morning. After the debriefing, teachers and staff typed up all the notes that was shared by the students from the morning

activity and the notes from the assembly was typed up by some of the facilitators. The notes can be found in Appendix A and B.

MARCH 8TH, 2019

During the Pedagogical Day, teachers worked in four different focus groups (one group for each topic discussed at the assembly) and decided what the next steps would be from the community assembly. From their findings, teachers started to look at some short-term and long-term goals they would work on as a school. The early stages of these goals are found in Appendix C.

MARCH 11TH, 2019

The newly-elected School Committee had their first official meeting on the evening of March 11th, 2019. One of the items on the agenda was the Community Assembly. Principal Betty Anne Forward shared with the members how the assembly was conducted, notes from the students' activity, and notes from the assembly. Betty Anne also shared what the teachers next steps would entail. It was suggested by one of the committee members to have a planning session with a couple of teachers and students to organize a follow-up assembly. The date is set for March 27th, 2019.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of these steps is to establish school improvement through student, teacher, staff, community and parental involvement and collaboration. This involvement needs to lead to a sense of ownership and engagement from all involved. Otherwise, all efforts will not produce the results we want and need for the success of our students and the future of our community. Steps have been taken towards this and need to continue.

Even prior to the February 27 incident, efforts and projects were undertaken. Among these, here are a few examples:

➢ To counter bullying, a group has been formed with the name *"Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Spaces"*. Composed of teachers and other resource people, their goal is to counter bullying by creating positive projects and spaces, leading to the acceptance and encouragement of everyone;
➢ Led by our teachers, the *"Creespective Committee"* aims to help support the inclusion of Cree perspectives in the teaching and activities within the school;
➢ At the Elementary School, *"Roots of Empathy"* has built relations with students and toddlers, to teach them the importance of helping others;
➢ Partnerships and collaborations have allowed us to bring in valuable assets into our schools, be it with "Mikw Chiyam", "Youth Fusion", "the Eeyou-Eenou Caisse Populaire Desjardins" or the "Martin Family Initiative"Foundation", we are able to offer a greater diversity of opportunities to our students and teachers. These partnerships and collaborations allow for students to find more methods to express themselves and enhance their lives as students;
➢ With other organizations, we seek to provide greater services to our students. We work closely with health and social support services, allowing us to provide services such as nurses in our schools, or to work closely in the support and intervention to help students and families in need;
➢ In November, we helped organize an anti-bullying assembly aimed at allowing resource people, parents and community members to better learn about the services and resources available in instances of bullying.
➢ In January, another initiative taken by the Elementary School was they made a safe haven room available to students who need a quiet place to de-escalate from a stressful situation. The safe haven room is mainly supervised by educators and it can also serve as an alternate place for students to work quietly.

Teachers at the high school are currently devising a plan to have a safe haven room at the secondary level.

As you can see, efforts have already started and will commence soon as we continue looking towards school improvement. However, the success of our students, our school and our future cannot happen without community involvement and engagement. Community includes our students, our parents, our elders, our leaders and our staff. The information gathered at the community assembly was not new, but it was a unique opportunity for all of us to hear each other, through a problem-solving approach and to see that the bridges which unite us need to be crossed more often. We are most grateful for the turnout from the Community Assembly and have begun to see more parents and community members visible in the school or checking in to see how everything is going and what they can do to help. We still have a long way to go but if everyone continues to move forward, we will see success.

APPENDIX C

(Action Plans 1st Stage)

ACTION/GOAL: Media literacy

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	We want students to understand the power of their devices and the "connectiquette," so they have the tools be conscious of its impacts or effects of social media. We will need a series of lesson plans or workshops. Our constraints are integrating media literacy into different subjects.
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	We will measure our progress by an evaluation (quiz on resources, uses, etc). We will know when our goal is achieved by incidents decrease
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	Our goal can be accomplished by creating a lesson/workshop Our first step should be to consult teachers on their personal expertise in the area
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	Yes this goal is worthwhile Yes this is the right time We have the right resources to begin
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	Short Term #1 Media Literacy Resource Collection Short Term #2 Student/Teacher Workshops Long Term #1 Toolkit of Resources Long Term #2 Community Outreach/Feedback

ACTION/GOAL: Create a safe space for students and teachers by reinforcing policies consistently

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- create a space that is safe for all (set up safe haven room) - to set the foundation - all policies printed and communicated - policies exist but not always clear
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- student safety survey - parent/community survey and feedback - have a room and schedule set up as an alternative space
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	- print and display policies in student-friendly language - share 4 Rs, create poster - create schedule, select room
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- yes, because communication needs to be clear - yes, it should have already been done - we have the documents, need to create posters
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- April 1st everything is posted and room is ready to be used - work on in relevant committee that already exists

ACTION/GOAL: Have a community gathering in April to report on what has been done and what is next. (also talk about student success, tips, tricks and info for exams/end of year

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- show accountability, provide opportunities for more student, teacher and community interactions - be accountable, many requests for gathering opportunities - need to select date, invite and promote
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- attendance and feedback from that event - have successful gathering in April
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	- plan the content of the gathering in different committees - need to set dates and deadlines for information to share and roles of creating invitations/tasks for the gathering
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- yes, to maintain accountability - yes, because one month or so from initial community assembly - need to pick location, gather resources that are available
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- this goal will be accomplished by April - the dates and plan will be established by the end of March - work on in relevant committee that already exists

(long term): Make these gatherings regular throughout the year

ACTION/GOAL: Orientation week at the beginning of the year for students and teachers

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- develop plan to introduce students and teachers to policies and routines at school - to develop rules and norms - plan of events, committee to develop and implement activities
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- regular timeline with deadlines - checklist and regular progress reports
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	- role of leadership and Creespective and OMOHOS, bring to school council for approval (?) - delegate duties to committees/people
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- worthwhile: yes - right time: yes - resources: reach out to community and teachers to accomplish 1 task
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- ready by June 25 (last day of school) to be implemented in Aug - worked on individually w/consultation via email/in person 1x/2 cycles

ACTION/GOAL: Violence/Bullying

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- reduce bullying in the school - better safer school - policies (clear) – teacher – com. And student involvement – consistency - one language for all - consequences clear - language – clarity – teacher tolerance - cyberbullying – outside?
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- reports (written) – data - SPI (training) - school atmosphere (survey on safety, assembly) - it's difficult
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal? 1) seeing policies, clear commun. 2) Making clear, specific policies/consequences 3) Workshops – in community/school parents	- support from CSB for clear policies and accountability from all shareholders (ex-com-CSB-Teach-stud) - data - clear policies/consequences sent out to all shareholders (comm.)
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- yeah - yeah - posters (anti-bullying/racism) - Bill C-56 - week workshops with students - clear policies
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- ongoing - never - yesterday/today/tomorrow

*Readaptation officer   **Cycle 1 – Empathy**

Suggestions for consequences – community involvement, help in elder's home, detention with elders/parents

Action – Are the CSB policies updated? Inventory of resources in school/community. Miiyuu Waasiiyuu Policy

ACTION/GOAL: (long term) Include school spirit initiatives in the LSIP

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- consistent school/community-wide involvement in non-academic activities - because it was expressed by the community - all staff on board, solid planning of expectations, calendar, events - lack of participation and accountability
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- record keeping (who participates, reflections of what goes well/what doesn't) - end of year report
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	- making sure all events are included in the school calendar; establish our "super committee" of everyone being involved plus establishing roles (Sec 5s as leaders?) - make house league groupings (multi-level groups) - start of year assembly/banquet to organize house leagues (involving community) - leadership skills/trainings - establishing roles within house leagues - include in workload/school schedule - school calendar (fun and academic activities) with all events outlined
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- yes! For next school year - we have the time to prepare
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- must be ready for Aug! - check with Leadership for LSIP creation

ACTION/GOAL: (long term) Create a student lounge

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- create a space where students can gather, feel ownership and responsibility for (could have 1 per floor?) - because there is no space for them now, and because it has been expressed - we need space, budget, a team to work on design, student involvement, time - lack of space, supervision/workloads
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- when the design is made, room(s) is allocated
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	- choose/find a space - staff on board (supervision...include in workload) - meeting with CEA for budget/orders - donations for furniture? - student group determined to help/plan
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- yes! - not currently but we will get there!
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- space ready for August! - work orders/furniture (due in April)

ACTION/GOAL: (long term) offer training to facilitate sharing circles

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- offer restorative justice circle facilitation training to teachers and staff to be better equipped support school, community, acceptance, respect and reduce judgement - decide and book - availability of trainers - budget - school calendars
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- feedback from staff – comfortable? - students' feedback - change in behavior and school culture
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	- include in 2019-2020 LSIP - choose a program - book, plan, execute - training mandatory for all staff on a PED day
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- yes - yes - not yet, need: budget, time to plan
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- next school year - before end of 2019-2020 school year - see "S"

ACTION/GOAL: (short term) As a team (students and teachers) we will make all classrooms warm and inviting

S	**SPECIFIC**	What do we want to accomplish? Why do we want to accomplish this? What do we need to accomplish this? What are our constraints?	- we will work as a community to work with students to design, decorate and identify priority classrooms - time and materials and money
M	**MEASURABLE**	How will we measure the progress? How will we know when the goal is achieved?	- before Goose Break, we will target one classroom - we will know the gal is achieved when the identified classroom receives one compliment
A	**ACHIEVABLE**	How can the goal be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to reach our goal?	- first step would be to identify the classroom in most dire need - next we would plan and execute the design and decoration
R	**RELEVANT**	Is this a worthwhile goal? Is this the right time? Do we have all of the necessary resources to accomplish this goal?	- yes this is worthwhile, it is the perfect time - it is to be discovered if we have the necessary resources
T	**TIMEBOUND**	How long will it take to accomplish this goal? When is the completion of this goal due? When are we going to work on this goal?	- it will take 1 week to identify the classroom - it remains to be determined for the length of time is outside of our control