

MINUTES OF THE DURHAM CAS COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL 30 November 2017

Attendance

Community:	Larry Johanson Leroy Clarke Sandra Forsythe (Co-Chair) Veralyn Alleyne Akilah Haneef Raphael Francis
Board:	Michelle Davis Bryan Buttigieg Natalie Perryman
Staff:	Dawn Walcott Parris Wanda Secord (Co-Chair)
Regrets:	Shaida Asseli
Administrative Support:	Susan McNeil (Minutes)

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm.

I. SOUL JOURNEY PRESENTATION

Dawn Walcott Parris welcomed Durham CAS Child and Youth Workers Kevin Anderson and Rosalie Morgan to the meeting. Rosalie is also the AOP Lead for youth in care of the Society. Both of these staff have been tremendous supporters of the agency's AO Collective Hands Sub-Committee which specifically works with African Canadian children and youth in care of the Society. The staff were instrumental in advocating for the agency's participation in the Soul Journey program, and participated in this year's program with the youth.

This year, five youth from Durham CAS (as part of a larger group of 50 youth and staff) participated in the 2017 Soul Journey program, which included two weeks of education/experiential learning, one week at the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas at York University, and one week in Jamaica, based at the Mona Campus of the University of West Indies.

At York, the youth learned about African culture, history, identity and lived experiences, and received information to help them access services and navigate the system in their community and in other communities. At the end of the week, the youth received a university certificate in Black Studies, and 20 hours towards their volunteer community service hours.

In Jamaica the group toured the Island, visiting historical sites such as Port Royal; Giddy House; relics of a sugar plantation; Accompong, a historic village where the Maroons battled the British; as well as cultural sites including the National Gallery of Jamaica (art); Bob Marley House; Tuff Gong recording studio; and other significant landmarks such as Dunn's River Falls. While on campus the youth received a tour of the University of West Indies.

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The presentation included slides from the two weeks, and video clips of interviews with youth at the end of the trip about their experiences, learning and inspiration.

The following was noted from a discussion / question and answer session following the presentation:

- The Collective Hands committee will look for opportunities to share the video of the Soul Journey participants' experiences with other youth in care of the Society.
- The agency would like be able to offer a similar experience (of the Soul Journey trip) to other youth. Soul Journey is founded within the Toronto CAS, who make space available to the agency. The cost to participate is significant so community support / fundraising would be welcomed, as suggested by a Council member.
- In response to a question, staff advised that one youth participant expressed interest in studying at the University of West Indies.
- A suggestion was made to research an organization called "30 Elephants", a Toronto based not for profit organization which takes youth (at no cost to them or their families) to cities and countries around the world in order to broaden their horizons and strengthen the global community. The council member who made this suggestion advised that her niece had an opportunity to go to Kenya through this program, which as noted was fully funded, with the exception of the cost of the vaccinations. She indicated it could be another opportunity for youth here to apply for this experience.
- Staff noted that one of the learnings from the experience was the importance of defining who would participate; finding youth who were willing/able to go was a challenge.
- A suggestion was made to present information about the Soul Journey experience to the next Building Bridges event.

On behalf of the Council, Co-Chairs Wanda Secord and Sandra Forsythe thanked the staff for their presentation.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Natalie Perryman, seconded by Bryan Buttigieg, to approve the agenda as circulated. CARRIED.

III. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on October 16, 2017 were reviewed and the following was noted:

Section IV, Workplan Development

- The first bullet point under the Heading "Purpose of the Council" was questioned, with discussion focusing on whether the wording accurately represents the intention of what was expressed at the meeting. The wording reads as follows: "Community members expressed not knowing the purpose of the Council."
Some members indicated they felt the issue was whether all members of the Council shared the same purpose / focus.
Following a brief discussion, Council members agreed to substitute the wording of the first bullet with the following: "Council members sought to reconfirm that there was consensus on the purpose of the council."
 - It was also agreed to delete the word "clearly" in the second bullet point.

MOTION by Sandra Forsythe, seconded by Dawn Walcott Parris, to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 16, 2017, with the following amendments under Section IV, Workplan Development, under the heading “Purpose of the Council”:

- **The first bullet point was amended to read as follows: “Council members sought to reconfirm that there was consensus on the purpose of the council.”**
- **The word “clearly” was deleted from the second bullet point.**

The motion CARRIED and the minutes, as amended, were approved.

IV. ACTION REGISTRY

The following was noted:

- #10, List of Community Organizations – Review by Staff
This item is included in the workplan choices, which the Council will be considering at this meeting.
- Item 11, Building Bridges event, follow up re questions from the Q&A session.
Staff indicated they believe this information has been posted on the website, but will confirm.

V. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

VI. MEETING OPERATIONS: REVIEW OF MEETING GUIDELINES, QUORUM, PUNCTUALITY, WORKING TOGETHER AS A TEAM

a) Review of Meeting Guidelines

The Council reviewed the “Meeting Guidelines” which were previously adopted, and included in the agenda.

The Co-Chairs highlighted the following points:

- #1 – We are responsible for respectful interactions with all those present.
- #2 – We value respectful listening:
 - Asking questions before telling your opinion,
 - No cross talk/interruptions,
 - Suspending judgment; and,
 - Taking pauses between people’s stories/offerings.
- #10 – We have a shared responsibility for meeting and committee success.

Decision:

In response to a suggestion, it was agreed that the meeting guidelines would be included in each agenda for reference.

b) Quorum and Punctuality

The Co-Chairs reminded Council members of the importance of punctuality and achieving and maintaining quorum at meetings. Council members were also reminded that if they cannot attend in person, or are running late for the meeting, there is the option to participate by phone

however the Meeting Recorder must be notified of this request prior to the meeting so that arrangements can be made.

c) Working Together as a Team

The Council discussed strategies for achieving working together as a team, and the following was noted from the discussion:

- The importance of an assumption of benevolence, i.e., an assumption that the people around them don't mean any harm, and working towards the same goal.
- Wish to see the group really united together, with a common agenda, and eliminate any sense of a line of demarcation.
- Are all members within the group equally valued, or is it a hierarchical structure, where some members are more valued than others?
- It takes time to get to a certain level of trust and working together. For some groups, this can take a few years to achieve. It is possible to move towards a high performance team, but it needs to be qualified in the reality of how human beings work together.
- There is a need for more openness – everyone is coming from different backgrounds and perspectives. It is not clear that there is a consistent goal or a consistent way of thinking that we can achieve a common purpose. For that to occur, true openness to change is needed. Team building exercises could be helpful.
- In one Council member's experience working with high performance teams and working groups, the commonality is trust and graciousness. She agreed with the need for more openness. Too often, discussions are personalized. A suggestion was made that members write down their assumptions, to determine the tensions in the group.
- A commitment for participation on a consistent basis is needed.
- It is useful for all Council members to remember that what we are doing is a new exercise, Durham CAS may be the only agency in the province that has established this type of council. The community/organization has its own history of oppression; we cannot ignore the fact that the two groups have been at odds for some time.
- During a meeting, if a council member has a sense that someone is unwilling to change on an issue, it was suggested that this be called out at the time. There may be valid reasons for the perspective, and we need to understand them. The individual may be defending a position because they are afraid of being wrong or because they can't change it.
- For community members, when sitting with CAS representatives, there is a history of oppression that has to be addressed. It was suggested that the CAS has the primary responsibility for establishing trust with the people who have experienced the harm. Organizational change is required, including structural and cultural changes.
- Although we cannot ignore the idea that there is a history of wrong behavior by the agency to some element of the community, the people who are running today's organization, although they are aware of the history, don't necessarily subscribe to those values. We can't make that assumption as it is not fair to the people who are there now to assume that they subscribe to those values.

VII. REVIEW OF WORK PLAN IDEAS AND DETERMINE WORK PLAN

At the last meeting, Council members brainstormed on suggestions for the work plan, giving consideration to what can be achieved during the year and presented at the May 2018 Building Bridges event. The brainstorming session generated six suggestions for the work plan: Community agencies/services; Trite reporting; Complaint Procedure; AO Manager; AO

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Structure/Support; and Anti-Black Racism Strategy. At the end of that discussion, Council members were asked to choose three items they considered priorities and which were achievable in the current year.

The results of the discussion and prioritizing exercise were included in the current agenda. Four items received the most votes, i.e., Trite Reporting, and Complaint Procedure (both received eight votes), and AO Manager, and AO Structure/Support (both received six votes). During the discussion at the last meeting, the group had felt that Trite Reporting and Complaint Procedure could be linked together and AO Manager and AO Structure / Support could be linked together, for the purposes of the work plan.

Co-Chair Wanda Secord asked Council members to review the summary, confirm that the priorities above are the will of the group, and agree to final priorities for the year that can be worked on during the year and reported back to the Building Bridges forum.

The following was noted from a discussion:

- It is the work of the council to determine the four priorities, to think through what is possible and what will have the greatest impact. One of the original reasons for coming together as a council was the issue of trite reporting.
- With respect to the AO Manager, some changes have been achieved – the position will now report to the Executive Director. Also the hiring process is underway.
- Anti-black racism strategy is interesting, the province is about to unveil an anti-black racism strategy. We need to take the recommendations from the Dr. Karumanchery report, and the provincial strategy, and leverage those; the work is mostly done.
- Question about how the complaints process relates to trite reporting. The complaint process is a process in place; what this group could do is look at the process, determine if it is good enough, and if are there improvements that could be made. Looking at the complaints procedure would be something that can be achieved, and reported to the community. The issue of Trite reporting, tackling overrepresentation is different. The agency is mandated to investigate all reports. A report on this issue would be useful to bring back to the forum as well.
- It was suggested the although priorities need to be established for the current year, this does not discount the importance of other things on the list.

Decision:

Following the discussion, the following priorities were agreed to for the 2017-18 work plan: Trite reporting and Review of the Complaints process.

It was noted that although the two issues are related, the strategies to address them may be different.

VIII. COMMUNITY AND AGENCY UPDATES

- A Council member indicated she had received a request from a community member to post the CAC Minutes on the Building Bridges website.
Decision: It was agreed that, in response to the community request and to promote transparency, the CAC minutes, once approved, will be posted to the Building Bridges website.
- A Council member indicated she had been contacted by a young person who has filed a complaint with the Society, which has not gone well according to the individual. Another

Council member indicated she had received a call from someone in the community, relating to an issue involving the school board.

The Co-Chair noted that the Council agreed earlier in the meeting that a review of the Complaints process would be a priority for this year's workplan; the issues raised above confirm that this was a good choice for a workplan priority.

IX. ELECTION OF CO-CHAIRS

The appointment of the current co-chairs was for a period of one year, which has now concluded. Nominations were therefore accepted for co-chairs for the 2018 year.

According to the Council's terms of reference, "the Council will be jointly and cooperatively chaired by a member of the community and a member of the agency who is either an employee or a Board member."

For the community representative co-chair:

Sandra Forsythe nominated Larry Johanson as Co-Chair. Larry declined the nomination.

Larry Johanson nominated Veralyn Alleyne as Co-Chair. Veralyn accepted the nomination.

For the board/staff representative co-chair:

Leroy Clarke nominated Michelle Davis as Co-Chair. Michelle declined the nomination.

Sandra Forsythe nominated Dawn Walcott Parris as Co-Chair. Dawn declined the nomination.

Leroy Clarke nominated Bryan Buttigieg as Co-Chair. Bryan declined the nomination (Bryan noted he felt he should not be in the position of Co-Chair while he is serving as President of the Board of Directors).

Bryan Buttigieg nominated Natalie Perryman as Co-Chair. Natalie accepted the nomination, with the understanding that her term on the Board of Directors expires in September 2018, and therefore she can serve as Co-chair only as long as her current term on the Board.

The new Co-Chairs, Veralyn Alleyne and Natalie Perryman, were congratulated on their election.

It was agreed that a transition meeting between the current co-chairs and the new co-chairs would be set up in the near future.

X. MEETING EVALUATION

There was general agreement that the meeting went well, was productive with focused discussions, members were respectful of others' rights and opinions, and there was consensus on the workplan.

XI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2018.

A request was made to add the following item to a future agenda:

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- Building Bridges Forum 2018 - "Outreach to the community" (i.e., advertise the forum early in order to improve attendance); issue a "save the date" invitation for the event.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Leroy Clarke, seconded by Michelle Davis, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. CARRIED.