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Clarington Diversity Advisory Committee Meeting - March 13th, 2025, 7:00pm to 9:00 p.m.

CDAC Members:

Tenzin Shomar
Rochelle Thomas
Koren Kassirer (joined 7:47 pm)
Bev Neblett
Starr Lee DeGrace
Councillor Anderson
Pranay Gunti
Lauren Reyes-Grange
Vincent Wong

Regrets: Ron Hooper

Also Present - Pinder DaSilva, Donnalee Smith (CLMA)

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm

1. Land Acknowledgement:

The Land Acknowledgement was read by T. Shomar.

2. Declaration of interest

There was no declaration of interest by members.

3. Review and Approval of agenda

Moved by B. Neblett; seconded by R. Thomas

That the agenda for March 13, 2025, be accepted.

Carried

4. Review of February 13, 2025, meeting minutes

Moved by R. Thomas; seconded by B. Neblett

That the minutes from February 13, 2025, for the CDAC meeting, be approved.

Carried



5. Guest Speaker – Danielle Harder – Honouring Indigenous Peoples (HIP)

The organization was started by a group of Rotarians who were interested in supporting local community groups and individuals.

The Rotary Club engaged with the First Nation communities to conduct research on the best way to partner with the communities. A common theme was the importance of education for youth.

10 years ago, the HIP Board was formed with both Rotarians and Indigenous People – focus on understanding the past and moving into the future. The Board is comprised of:

- 50% Indigenous; 50% non-Indigenous
- Gender Parity: 50-50
- Representatives from across Canada

The National Youth to Youth program is HIP's flagship program. It is fully funded and is in its' third year:

- Youth from across the country apply to participate and a selection committee determines who is selected.
- The group is comprised of 50% Indigenous and 50% non-Indigenous youth.
- It is focused on talking openly about fostering cultural understanding, intergenerational trauma, Truth and Reconciliation, environmental stewardship and impacting systems change.
- A key component of the program is building relationships across the country between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and Indigenous to Indigenous students from different Nations
- Each year, the program starts with 2 on-line sessions focused on Indigenous cultural competency led by First People's Group.
- The in-person is a week-long training. For 2025, the in-person event will take place in Nova Scotia.
- There is a lot of professional and personal growth and empowerment and immense pride. Youth are asked to take action in their home communities after the annual training.

Next steps:

- Measuring impact, especially the downstream impact
- Building a similar model but for teachers

6. Nazi hate swastika sign at Courtice playground

Committee members discussed the Nazi swastika that was spray painted at a playground in Courtice and what are some action steps the Committee could take to support, not only the Jewish community, but other communities who are affected by such acts of hate and white supremacy.

Key points of discussion:

- Some other municipalities have put motions forward asking the federal government to ban the swastika Nazi sign based on the fact that it is a symbol of hate.
- P. Gunti shared that the original swastika word is derived from the Sanskrit language and the symbol has great cultural significance for the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain culture. It represents good fortune and prosperity and the use of it goes back hundreds of years in these cultures and religions.
- Committee members discussed that the Nazi symbol Nazi (卐 - rotated 45 degrees, giving it a slanted appearance) is different than the Hindu swastika (卐 - oriented horizontally, with its arms pointing in four cardinal directions).
- P. Gunti stated that he recognizes the pain and agony the symbol has caused for other cultures, but it will be important that the motion the Committee puts forward to Council differentiates between the Nazi symbol and Hindu, Buddhist and Jain symbol of posterity.
- Committee members agreed that this is a great opportunity to educate the public about the differences between the symbols. Members stated additional education related to hate against the newcomers and minority communities is also needed given the increase in hate activities on line and in the community.
- This could also be an opportunity to create a common language amongst all the municipalities. P. DaSilva shared that this specific topic is on the agenda for the Regional DEI committee meeting next week.
- Committee members agreed that the fact that it is a symbol of prosperity and love in other religions is not a reason to do nothing about the Nazi hate symbols.
- L. Reyes-Grange shared that this Committee did discuss in 2021 the possibility of putting a motion forward to Clarington Council about banning symbols of hate which included the Nazi swastika and the Confederate flag, but the decision at the time was that this couldn't move forward due to legal concerns such as freedom of speech.
- The Committee asked if there were protocols in place by the municipality on how to track anti-hate incidents. K. Kassirer shared that agencies in the Jewish communities are trying to track this type of data.

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- P. DaSilva shared that DRPS tracks hate crime incidents and sends out monthly statistical dashboards to the municipalities. P. DaSilva will find out if this information can be shared with the Committee.
- Committee members agreed that work related to these topics needs to be more proactive with a continuous approach, not reactive whenever an incident happens.
- Committee members agreed to focus this motion on the swastika symbol and add specific discussions related to other symbols of hate to future meetings.

Moved by K. Kassirer; seconded by V. Wong

Whereas in recent years, Nazi swastika, known as the hakenkreuze, and iconography has surfaced with alarming frequency in the public sphere, used by an increasing number of groups and individuals to promote hate and instill fear within Canadian society; and

Whereas the swastika word originates from the Sanskrit word "svastika" and the symbol (卐 - oriented horizontally, with its arms pointing in four cardinal directions) has been used for thousands of years in various cultures, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, to represent good fortune, well-being and auspiciousness; and

Whereas the Nazi (卐 - rotated 45 degrees, giving it a slanted appearance) appropriation of the swastika word and symbol drastically changed its perception in the Western world, associating it with hate, and atrocities during World War II; and

Whereas, despite the growing presence of the swastika word and symbol in our country becoming synonymous with systematic violence and terror, the swastika continues to be used very extensively in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain prayer, worship, and other auspicious ceremonies, symbolizing positive attributes like prosperity and well-being; and

Whereas eighteen countries have already taken action to ban Nazi symbols, it is imperative that Canada follow suit;

Therefore, be it resolved:

That the Clarington Diversity Advisory Committee supports B'Nai Brith's call to the Government of Canada to pass legislation banning the public display of Nazi symbols and iconography, including the Nazi hakenkreuze, while permitting the use of the sacred swastika word and symbol by communities such as the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain; and



That the Clarington Diversity Advisory Committee request Clarington Council to support and pass this motion.

Carried

7. Land Acknowledgement Discussion

The Committee members agreed on the importance of personalizing land acknowledgements at the beginning of each meeting instead of simply reading the acknowledgement.

Members discussed again the importance of public education and socialization of this type of knowledge on a more regular basis.

Members discussed the option of rotating the land acknowledgement amongst Committee members and then each individual could decide how/if they wanted to personalize it.

Members also discussed the importance of ensuring that everyone is comfortable with saying and personalizing the land acknowledgement. It was decided that members would give this idea some thought and bring it back for further discussion at the next meeting.

8. Recruitment for new youth and organizational members

P. DaSilva shared that recruitment posting is on the website and will be live on social media and asked members to share it with their network.

9. CDAC 2025 Work Plan

The Student Bursary working group has a meeting coming up shortly

Members discussed updating the working plan to include an education working group based on the conversation today. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

10. Council Update

Councillor Anderson shared an update on the fire in downtown Bowmanville:

- Approximately 36 residents were displaced. Those displaced residents who did not have family or friends to stay with are being housed by the Region of Durham at local hotels until temporary or permanent housing can be found.
- Councillor Anderson encouraged everyone to donate what they could. He stated that it has been great to see a unified Clarington come out of the tragedy.

Councillor Anderson also encouraged members to shop local as much as possible given the tariff situation with the U.S.



Moved by K. Kassirer; seconded by S. DeGrace

That the DAC meeting be adjourned at 8:54 pm

Carried

Next meeting April 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.