

**Dreamacres Committee Meeting Minutes** – February 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 @ 7pm, Sunningdale Library

*Attendance*

*Karen Brock, Nancie Charlebois, Marius de Bruyn, Mona & Andrew Garde, Suzanne Leclerc-Harwood, Maggie Linton, Sharon O'Donnell, Daniele Schaad, Tricia Schaefer, Jane Thompson & Virginia Mullin*

*Guests*

*Nick Maandag, & Ken Birtch, HDSB, Maintenance & Facility Services; Velma Ganassini; Linn Maund, School Council observer*

*Absent*

*Helen Conlon*

*Contribution Count Total for this meeting*

Meeting Hours	.....	11 x 2 <sup>hrs</sup>	= 22
Professional Meeting Hours	.....	5 x 2 <sup>hrs</sup>	= 10

*Presentation by Mme Linton*

Maggie welcomed all members of *Dreamacres* to our first meeting of the New Year and our special guests, Nick & Ken.

Our principles of mutual respect and tradition, in conjunction with our objectives were reviewed.

*The Culture of Dreamacres – Feb 1, 2007*

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all, to the first *Dreamacres* meeting of 2007. May I ask that we go around the table and introduce ourselves. Thank you

The *Dreamacres* programme has a long and happy 11 year history as one of the most important, most enduring, and most endearing Sunngindale programs. To the novice it may appear to be simply a playground greening project . For those who have been at the heart of it's development it is understood that *Dreamacres* is about teaching and learning, as it pertains to the curriculum, as it pertains to social skills, as it pertains to reconnecting our students to nature.

*Dreamacres* has a long and happy history of achievement and recognition, locally, provincially and federally. The foundation of these successes is simple... the ability of a group of people to maintain and to develop positive relationships.

Relationships established on collective hard work, mutual respect and especially, may I underline, consideration for the ideas, the wisdom and the dedication of every member, parent, teacher, community member involved in the *Dreamacres* programme. We work in an arena of connecting behaviour, supporting encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, negotiating differences. In as much as we model to the students how to respect and to relate to nature, we also as a "Tribes" programme school model in our

communication and behaviour our "Tribes" key values: Mutual Respect Respecting is active, one can see it in word and deed.

Participation as well as the right to pass, Appreciation (no put downs) and Attentive Listening. As we teach our children to display respect and appreciation for those people from the past, who have made their good life possible, so it follows that New members join the *Dreamacres* family in an atmosphere of excitement and respect for the work that has gone before. As chair of this committee I assure you that I take very seriously my responsibility for the maintenance of this positive, happy culture.

Over the years we have developed a process that has established the *Dreamacres* meetings as the forum for *Dreamacres* business out of which sub committees are formed and specific members act as liaison into the larger community i.e. Marius and Suzanne are the liaison with HDSB and Karen is our liaison with the Evergreen Foundation. In this light I am very pleased to Welcome Nick and Ken this evening to our *Dreamacres* meeting as they bring further communication from the HDSB.

#### *Presentation by Mr Maandag*

Nick reviewed the healthy situation, we have at Sunningdale, where communication is occurring and solutions are sought. As we know, the Environment is of huge concern at the Board. As one of the leaders, in this district, Sunningdale, is looked upon as a model of its' healthy attitude for the environment and safety. Both issues need to work together... the current bumps we are experiencing because we are one of the first school's to forge these new avenues. As a result, there are a few issues that both Nick & Ken would like to address currently and for the future.

#### *Our Future Initiatives*

Future projects are to follow the "Creative Playground Policies", with ideas generated at the school level and then presented to facility services (Nick & Ken), for review, before any further planning or fundraising. It is recognized that this might take time, but, moving forward they want to be sure all schools, are following protocol. It was mentioned that there are all types of new concerns they need to address (i.e. anaphylaxis etc).

#### *Our Current Inventory*

Nick confirmed that overall our position with the Board is a positive one but they have reviewed our *Dreamacres* project, in response to recent parent concerns.

- The spill area has been modified with a French drain, which is constantly monitored, for its effectiveness. Daily observation by custodial staff.
- See-thru gates will be installed around the spill area, this spring. Agreed that Marius will provide options for the gate & closing mechanisms for review and approval by Maggie, Suzanne, Ken & Nick. At this point, Velma expressed her concern with the accumulation of water, in the fall. This was addressed, by both Marius & Maggie, as a result of the extremely heavy fall rain – the drainage, was slowed by the Town's required silt fence and the build-up of debris. This spring and for the future, the expectation is that as the plants mature, they will absorb much of the normal rainwater accumulation. Unfortunately, the grounds were disturbed by the installation of the French drain and the damage to the vegetation/growth will be monitored this spring. Maggie clarified that the area was never intended to be a pond and that the mandatory silt fences was not a pond liner, as assumed.
- Leo Ostner, Town of Oakville, had reviewed the site.
- A follow-up meeting with Nick, Ken, Suzanne, Maggie, Marius, Chris & Velma is scheduled for Tuesday, February 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Stone Seating has been approved and Marius & Nick have agreed on placement of the stones, to ensure that they are far enough apart to ensure student safety.
- Wood Chips vs. Mulch – is a new concern with the Board, as it has been identified as a "Slip, Trip & Fall" item – together, we need to investigate new options. It was mentioned that the classrooms and hallways are much, much muddier this season, in the absence of woodchips. Karen: The benefits can outweigh the disadvantages e.g. by providing a softer, therefore, safer kid-friendly play-surface during months when red clay becomes rock-hard. Karen suggested the possibility of employing a more devoted sweeping program.

- Nick mentioned that some parents had expressed concern about the space under the bridges, which they felt was a hazard for children trying to crawl underneath. A suggestion has been made that the opening be covered with a grid of some sort. Both Marius and Maggie expressed concern with debris accumulating and causing water back up. Linn mentioned that the strangling potential was of greater concern. Tricia suggested that perhaps there is some type of staking we could do. Agreed that Ken/Marius will review our options further – in adherence to “Creative Playground Policies”.

Nick noted that these issues could be addressed right away, while others may not be as suitable for a quick fix.

Velma said she feels that the Canadian Safety Association standards (CSA) should apply to any item on school property. Various articles were quoted by Velma and will be forwarded to the *Dreamacres* Committee for review. [*Safety hazards at Oakville schoolyard (forwarded from Velma)*] email dated February 2, 2007, is available from the *Dreamacres* Committee, to anyone who requests a copy].

It would appear that many varying guidelines can be obtained depending on the classification of item – does it fall under the Building Code, or CSA guidelines or “Creative Playground Guidelines” – this will need to be discussed and reviewed, with the Board as issues arise.

Sharon queried, is only *Dreamacres* being reviewed? If safety is an issue, why have the bent, metal stakes at the front of the school not been identified as a safety issue?

Nick confirmed, that the process for voicing safety concerns is to the *Dreamacres* committee & Suzanne (principal) and/or Louanne (VP). The *Dreamacres* Committee should continue their great working relationship with Facility Services – just keep in mind – they don’t have any money to initiate things!!! They are very pleased with our ability to fund things on our own – and recognized our achievement of over \$120K in fundraising initiatives over the years.

The Board is focussing on greening initiatives – heightened public awareness, increases public support. Sunningdale is a leader, for the Board in this area. It was noted, that in the recent “Education Matters – Volume 14, Fall 2006” three schools are recognized for their environmental commitment, “schoolyard naturalization including outdoor classrooms”.

Marius addressed the recouping of GST, from the Board. Nick suggested Rose Brooks, Biz Services might be of assistance. Linn suggested that Rob Skidmore be contacted and mentioned that she thought it was only retroactive by 2 years.

Finally, Nick requested that we move forward with a “holistic approach” – taking the many issues into consideration and reiterated that all contact to the Board be through Suzanne.

Maggie thanked Nick & Ken for joining our meeting.

Tricia initiated a last-minute question, as to how quickly issues will be resolved given this new process. Nick suggested it will vary case by case... and confirmed that clearly, should the bridges be of great concern, they’d be blocked-off by now – he looks to our expertise & years of experience, in conjunction with partnership with them that appropriate solutions will be reached in an appropriate amount of time. Again, concerns are to be expressed to Suzanne and options for solutions discussed. As appropriate, Suzanne will take the issues to Nick & Ken for approval and moving forward.

Nick & Ken left the meeting. Followed, shortly, thereafter, by Velma and Linn.

### *Applications & Funding*

Karen confirmed that *Dreamacres* was recently awarded the Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds Grant for the 2006-07 school year and has been confirmed as \$2000. This money will be used to plant a “sugar bush” of 39 maples and to pay for seating in the outdoor classroom area surrounded by these shade trees.

### *Finances*

Daniele confirmed that \$1870 was generated by teacher gifts of trees, 143 cards from 67 families. Suzanne confirmed that she would have Rob Skidmore, School Council Treasurer, deposit our cheques. [*Rob confirmed deposit made to Virginia 2/13/07*]

**Handouts & Accolades**

“Everybody in the vegetable patch” Maclean’s January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007 article was distributed. Jane highlighted: “... kids of outdoor schools suffer 80 per cent fewer contagious sicknesses, such as colds, sore throats and ear infections. Studies in Germany have found that kids are less aggressive and suffer fewer injuries. ...” “In a public middle school... where teachers used local rivers, mountains and forests to teach lessons, 96 per cent of students met or exceeded state standards for math problem-solving, compared with 65 per cent of grade eights at other schools. Student behaviour also improved. ...Disciplinary referrals at another school dropped from 560 to 50 the year its outdoor program was launched.”

Jane detailed that thank you notes received from Sandra McCoy’s grade 2 class, thanking the grade 6ers for planting the trees in the fall. The grade 6 class wrote huge thank you back and read them to the grade 2 class... it was a fantastic exchange of appreciation for each other and learning as a result of *Dreamacres*. One child was overheard saying: “We’re leaving, so you’re going to have to look after the trees.” [Perhaps this is a great opportunity for a dual-bulletin-board-display: “We asked; they replied!”]

**Stone Seating**

The official engraving plan for the granite seats was presented and reviewed. The seats will be engraved with progressive maps of the growth of Canada – a fantastic historic reference and learning tool. Many teachers, parents and our community’s service-providers were involved in the research for the historical maps.

**Long-term objectives**

Maggie reviewed Ron Ballentine’s (Halton District School Board, Science Consultants of Ontario and a member of the EcoSchool Steering Committee), desire that we obtain certification as an EcoSchool – which not only partners the objectives of *Dreamacres*, but objectives which must be obtained by Sunningdale as a whole – encompassing all aspects of energy conservation, waste management and waste minimization. Agreed we should review the criteria and start to outline goals and initiatives to be met.

**For Discussion at our next meeting**

- Spring clean up – purchase longer cedar rails for the fence; trimming back knobs on branches
- Information distribution initiatives – updating the bulletin board (Gr2/Gr6 notes re trees; before & after shots)
- Student & parent walking-tour of *Dreamacres* “getting to know *Dreamacres*...”
- 10-year Anniversary / Spring Celebration – what should we do?

**Next Meetings & Important Dates**

Tuesday, March 20 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Dreamacres</i> Mtg	Sunningdale Library
Thursday, April 26 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Dreamacres</i> Dig-In	Sunningdale
Tbc	10-Year Event	Sunningdale

**Contribution Summary – Fall/Winter 2006/07 school year**

description	calc for this mtg	mtg totals	total hrs <small>(incl of this mtg)</small>
Meeting Hours	22	22 .....	116
Maggie Linton	2 + 6	8 .....	34
Dig-In Volunteers			
Woodchips & Fence Repair	4 hrs x 20 volunteer (+families)	80 .....	80+
Foire de l’Automne Book Sale	46	46 .....	46
Grant Application Fall/06	4	4 .....	12
Grant Application 2006/07 & Spring Event proposal	10	10 .....	10
Professional Meeting Hours (Marius hrs)	2 + 6	8 .....	34
Dig-In Professional Hours	4 + 30 hrs x 1	43 .....	43
Board Professional Hours (2persons x 3hrs/mtg x 3)	2 x 3 x 3	18 .....	18
Hours-in-Kind (e.g. newsletters, accounting, photocopying etc)	10	10 .....	45

**438+**

*“Dreamacres – L’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux”*