

# Meeting Minutes

## **Anti-Black Racism Working Group**

Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6:30 pm

Online – Zoom Web Call

**Attendees:** Stephen Linton (Chair), Nicole Facey (Notetaker), Charmain Brown, Shaibu Gariba, Titi Katibi, Teronie Donaldson, Marsha Hinds Layne, Romina Diaz

**Library Staff:** Sabrina Yung, Elaine, Chris Moore, Rebecca

**Absent:** -- Bernadette Hood-Caesar,

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### 1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement & ABRWG Ancestral Acknowledgement

Since January 2022 both messages are read at the beginning of each meeting. Tonight's Ancestral Acknowledgement Stephen acknowledge his great-grand and grandmothers.

Sabrina welcome back library staff Rebecca, Elaine and Chris to continue on the library's collection presentation.

### 2. Conflict of Interest Declaration (Standing Agenda Item)

- No conflicts of interest declared.

### 3. Review February, March, and April Meeting Minutes (5 minutes)

- ABRWG reviewed all meeting minutes and agreed for minutes to be posted.
- **Stephen (Chair) Update:** ABRWG group members, Stephen, Marsha and Teronie attended the May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting with the Anti-Black Racism Task Force. The purpose of the meeting is to see if they want to work with us, and they have agreed to work with us. Thanks to Marsha for putting together the PowerPoint presentation and Teronie supported the conversation.
- **Sabrina Update:** Still would like to have a date for the proclamation, but maybe we can put it on the agenda for the next meeting in June.

### 4. Continuation of the Pickering Public Library Collections Presentation

- **Rebecca** wanted to circle back to the topic of the publishing industry and the 5 major publishers. To clarify, the Library does not restrict purchasing to only the 5 major publishers. We also purchase from other small publishers. The reason why we more commonly purchase from the 5 major publishers is because they are generally the publishers of the large majority of best sellers. Best sellers are in demand in our community.

**Engaging the community with Collections development:**

- Clients are able to submit requests for purchasing via the Library's website. Once a client submits a request, it is reviewed by staff (typically reviewed by the Librarians). It takes about two weeks to review a request for various reasons. Considerations include (but are not limited to): whether it is relevant for the community, whether it meets the selection criteria in the resource development policy, whether the Library offers the material already in a different format, and cost/budget.
- When a request is approved or denied, staff would share feedback in their response to the requesting client. There are different factors for denying a request. Often denied requests are a result of the material not meeting the Library's selection criteria. At times we already own a sufficient amount of copies in the same or other format. Sometimes the item is also not available for purchase.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** If I request the book first, would I be the first person to get it? **Rebecca's response:** No, once the book that you're requesting is in the catalogue you would need to put a hold on it.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** Do you keep data of the approved and denied requests? **Rebecca's response:** Staff currently track totally number of approved and denied request annually. For example, in 2021, we had approximately 1200 requests submitted in total. Of that, 750 were approved.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** The books you purchase, do you have them in audiobook format also? **Rebecca's response:** When you submit a request, you're given the option to choose what format you would like it in. If the request is approved, staff will try to purchase it in the requested format. Additionally, e-books and audio books can be significantly more costly than the print format, which has to be taken into consideration when determining the format, the Library can move forward with. To meet the diverse reading needs of clients, staff try to purchase various formats when possible. **Elaine's response:** Also, not everything is available in every format. At times materials requested may not be produced or available in the client's desired format.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** Do publishers provide free review copies to libraries? Or do they make libraries purchase everything? **Rebecca's response:** Libraries purchase all the materials. Sometimes publishers may send libraries advanced reader copies for staff to preview, however those materials are not permitted for public circulation. *(Post-meeting note: Sometimes those copies are also not the final version and contain not yet proofread content, which is also why they are not permitted for full circulation).*
- **Question from ABRWG member:** Why can't you purchase from Amazon? **Rebecca's response:** Amazon has their own publishing company. Generally, Amazon does not make their books, e-books, and audiobooks available to public library vendors.

#### **Requests for reconsideration of materials:**

- What this means, is that someone has asked the library to have an item removed from a collection or moved to a different collection. For example, a client may feel that a particular children's book contains content that may be concerning or sensitive. The client may suggest moving the book out of the children's collection

area to prevent a child discovering the book without their adult/caregiver's guidance or discretion.

- When there is concern, the individual may submit a formal request to staff (e.g., "I object to the item in your collection and I think that no one in the community should have access to this"). Staff take these concerns very seriously and would then begin the review process. It is important to note that just because someone does not agree with a collection item, it does not mean that everyone agrees with the submitted concern. Staff would certainly exhibit due diligence to understand the source of the concern, perform research, consult stakeholders relevant to the topic, consider best practices related to the topic, and much more, before determining a decision.
- Some of the common requests often focus on children's materials and concerns about inappropriate content for youth (e.g., differing opinions about humour, LGBTQ content, critical race theory, and personal beliefs or values).
- **Question from ABRWG member:** What is the process for removing a book from a collection? **Rebecca's response:** We look back to our policies and we review the request for removal. We go through our selection criteria. We also look at other libraries and other resources. For context, since the year 2000, Pickering Public Library has only received 12 formal requests for reconsideration/removal.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** When a request is denied, do you meet with the individual(s) to go over why their request was denied? **Rebecca's response:** A formal email is sent with the decision and rationale. If the client wants to meet with staff for more information, they certainly can.
- The role of collection librarians is to use our resource development policy to choose a wide range of materials that meet the many different information and leisure needs of our community. We are not meant to judge or restrict access to information unless the content of the material does not meet our selection criteria. When purchasing materials, the library must focus on ensuring access and intellectual freedom, as well as being responsive to what the unique local community is interested in (driven by loaning statistics and community data).
- **Question from ABRWG:** With the Russian-Ukraine war and the sanctions, have any books been removed from the library? **Rebecca's response:** No. **Chris Response:** Sanctions may potentially affect publishers and access to purchasing materials from affected regions.

### Connecting our clients and community with collection

- We have monthly displays of books in different parts of each library.
- We highlight different collections (e.g. non-fiction, home and garden).
- We have the popular picks section. We also look at placement of items (e.g. showcase in the lobby instead of it being on the shelf).
- We also pay attention to the identification of items that are of particular interest to clients. Reader advisory interactions are where staff can recommend a book similar to what the reader is reading or generally enjoys reading. Staff can also conduct reference interviews for more in depth research or inquiries.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** Do you accept book donations? **Rebecca's response:** We do not collect book donations anymore. The reason being the resources required to process donations can be high and this is not a priority

compared to other demands for staff time. **Elaine's response:** Also we do not have the space.

### Engaging online and in community promotions

- We have the website and catalogue. Helps make access easier, extends catalogue reach and provides themes, recommended book lists and more.
- Marketing: We use social media posts and eblasts and in-library signs and promotions to raise awareness about what is offered across the various collections.
- Events and outreach: We have curated collections to display at events, bring to outreach events (e.g., storytimes at class visits), and we provide one-on-one interactions with staff during events.
- **Comment from ABRWG member:** I am engaging with a lot of immigrant youth who have moved to Durham and the library is a new thing for them. They are finding it hard to navigate the online system in trying to access resources from the library, and I think that we need to do something to support them. **Sabrina's response:** Our community outreach staff attend events and community partner sites to provide supports for community members. This could be demonstrations for any of our digital products, training on how to use the catalogue, library card registration, and more. During the pandemic, due to in-person events being restricted or our focus is to do more in-library services. However, we are getting back into outreach now. The library can conduct tours and staff are dedicated to be back at community events and at the local schools.

### Collection Maintenance and Decision Making

- Collection statistics: Statistics captured through ILS (integrated library system) and are sorted, analyzed.
- Usage statistics inform decisions related to the collections budget, selecting and purchasing, weeding, collection projects and strategic goals.
- Other statistics and community data may be used to further inform collections initiatives and decision making and to help meet our community's needs.
- Common stats: circulation, number of holds, cost per cycle or cost per use.
- **Suggestion from ABRWG member:** To have an intern who can help the collection team.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** Is there a training that someone has to have to make decision on what book should be in the library? **Rebecca response:** Yes. They would need to understand the selection criteria and library policies that needs to be followed when it comes to collections.
- **Question from ABRWG member:** How easy would it be for me (or the general public) to access information about the collection development policy and selection criteria? Is this transparent and shared? **Rebecca's response:** Yes. This information is shared. **Sabrina's response:** The library has the resource development policy on the website [https://pickeringlibrary.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2022/04/Library-Policy-P08-Resource-Development\\_Apr2022-1.pdf](https://pickeringlibrary.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2022/04/Library-Policy-P08-Resource-Development_Apr2022-1.pdf)  
[https://pickeringlibrary.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2021/10/P20-Local-Author-Creator-Collection\\_AODA-compliant.pdf](https://pickeringlibrary.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2021/10/P20-Local-Author-Creator-Collection_AODA-compliant.pdf)

- **Question from ABRWG member:** Do you have any data on how many requests or materials are from the Black community? **Rebecca's response:** No. We do not have access to such data.

### Weeding the Collection

- Weeding is the process of removing materials from the collections, and it is based on specific criteria and goals.
- Weeding improves the circulation of materials, as they make it easier to browse the collections and to locate desired titles.
- Removes items which are worn/damage and unlikely to circulate
- Removes items which are out of date.
- Removes items which are no longer used by our community (determined by last circulation date and/or number of times circulated overall).
- Physical library space is limited and in demand for many public service purposes. We cannot keep all materials forever.
- Weeding involves the use of pulling reports based on certain and specific criteria. Example, staff may look at items where there has been no circulation (client loaning) in the last 2 years.
- Grubby weeding involves removing the items that are not looking good due to damage and overuse.
- Duplicates may be reduced when the popular titles are not circulating as much anymore.
- Weeding can also include looking for out of date or irrelevant content.
- Overall, all we want to make sure that we are left with the materials that the community wants access to.

### Collection Special and Specific Audits

- Increasingly in libraries, diversity, equity, inclusion and/or anti-racism 'audits' are being developed and implemented. We have not done it in the past and are currently trailing an audit with the children's Storytime book collection. These books are specific to staff led Storytimes at the library.
- The idea behind the audits is to examine materials using developed criteria, to determine how the content (title, text, imagery etc) may perpetuate concerning, hurtful and harmful ideas.
- It is a very staff intensive process, as it involves staff taking time to go through each book using a list of assessment criteria. We will have to explore how to effectively perform these audits in addition to other collections tasks.
- There is a lot of learning, piloting, and redesigning of these processes as we move forward. Public libraries share a lot of with each other, so we will also collaborate and learn from other libraries too.
- **Comments from ABRWG members:** It's important that the community also understands what librarians do. As a group, we have to start thinking about the library with a youth lens. We should think about how the younger generation interacts with the library's collections and how we can create a positive experience and space for them.

**Next Steps:**

- The next collections focused meeting with the team will be the July ABRWG meeting. This will give some time for reflection of all the information shared, and consideration for where the ABRWG would like to prioritize their focus for further, deeper collaborative discussion this year and next year.
- Ahead of the July meeting, the group will reflect and think on:
  - What is the possible role of the ABRWG when it comes to collaborating with staff who develop and support the library's collection?
  - What are the areas of growth or opportunities that stand out to you?
  - What are the problems we are trying to solve?
  - Knowing that our goal is to determine some priorities and recommendations that are collaboratively achievable, what priorities come to mind? Where could we start? What is the impact or outcome we are hoping to achieve?

**Preliminary Reflections and Suggestions from ABRWG Members (to be revisited):**

- We can come up with list of our top 10-20 title recommendations.
- Have a small group tackle each recommendation and then we meet to discuss it so to measure it.
- We can focus on work that the library is already doing and build our recommendations around the existing work.
- We need to make our recommendations intentional.
- Looking at how do we modernize what the library has right now to make it relevant.
- How would our recommendations support the Black community in terms of the use and how do we successfully create a space and engage the community around any change?
- How do we promote a space that is welcoming and serving the community?
- Also, looking at what is a collection.
- Also normalizing the black community in the library space.
- Having audio books that have youth's voices reading it.

**Checking-in on the Deferred Agenda Items:**

- Group approved February, March, and April minutes. Sabrina can post to the public landing page.
- Group will circle back to proclamation at our June meeting to discuss next steps. Stephen encourages thinking about what significant calendar date the group thinks should be associated with the proclamation.
- No concerns were tabled regarding the latest revisions to the ABRWG Terms of Reference. Sabrina can post revised copy to the public landing page.

**Youth Subcommittee Update**

- The group will be meeting next week.
- When we meet with the group, we will raise the point around replacing previous subcommittee ABRWG representatives that had left. Having 4 may help with workload, sharing meeting attendance frequency.

**Other Business:**

**Stephen comment:** Would like to raise for discussions, can we talk about the race-based issues related to criminal reference checks for young people who want to volunteer with the library? Would like to understand the thought process behind the requirement of a police reference check for all volunteers and how the barriers for some may be overcome. Police carding has led to some Black youth having a record, for example. This may prevent them from being able to apply to volunteer and/or participate in library opportunities.

**Sabrina's response:** A police record check is required for all volunteers looking to volunteer with the library, as volunteers work with the public which includes the vulnerable sector. With that said, I can look into all the rationale behind this requirement and bring forward the information for discussion.