

Meeting Minutes

Anti-Black Racism Working Group

Wednesday, April 12, 2023, 6:30 pm

Online – Zoom Web Call

Attendees: Romina Diaz, Charmain Brown, Shaibu Gariba, Marsha Hinds Myrie

Note: As we did not achieve quorum, members in attendance discussed and determined to continue the meeting and acknowledged any decision(s) requiring quorum would be deferred to the next meeting where quorum is achieved.

Library Staff: Sabrina Yung (Notetaker), Shobha Oza, Jackie Flowers, Rebecca Courtney, Elaine Bird, Chris Moore

Absent: Titi Katibi, Bernadette Hood-Caesar, Samantha Adebisi, Nicole Facey, Teronie Donaldson, Stephen Linton

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

- Charmain offered an African Ancestral Acknowledgement that is framed for students:

African Ancestral Acknowledgement - Primary Version

We acknowledge the generations of people of African descent who were forced to this land. We honour their past and present contributions of excellence to our community and resilience in tearing down discrimination. We stand with them in demanding social justice for all.

We stand for love (hand heart at chest).

We stand for strength (muscle arm).

We stand for justice for all (straight arm fist in air).

2. Conflict of Interest Declaration (Standing Agenda Item)

- No conflict of interest declared.

3. Review Last Meeting Minutes

- No edits or omissions declared.

4. Recent Incidents, Incident Feedback and Next Steps

- The library has been experiencing an increased volume of incidents involving teens during the past few months, with a particular increase in March.
- As a result of the rise of concerning incidents, staff implemented a reset initiative that saw service restrictions put in place and extra support from a second

security guard, during the peak hours of recent incident occurrences at the Central Library (weekdays, 3:00pm to 7:00pm).

- The library has been open with the community in sharing concerns about how the incidents have impacted clients and staff. Leadership felt it was important to extend this transparency to the ABRWG.
- Initially, the most serious incidents involved teens vaping in the library, horseplay, and foul language. In March, the incidents escalated in frequency and seriousness, including elevated verbal conflict and physical violence, specifically teen on teen violence.
 - There was a significant incident where a physical fight broke out between two teens in the teen/adult area. 40 teens who were nearby jumped on surrounding chairs/furniture and started filming. It became a challenging situation that was difficult to deescalate for staff and the security guard.
 - Another incident involved a group of teens swarming another teen client.
- The goal of the reset initiative has been to restore the teen/adult area of the Central Library to be a safe space. The reset focused on identifying and addressing the things that promoted the conflict or fighting. It was identified that large volumes of clients in one single area was largely contributing to horseplay which tended to escalate to more serious conflict and the collaborative (small group) meeting rooms appeared to be where many incidents began. As such, the reset involved:
 - Closing the video game station temporarily.
 - Closing the collaborative meeting rooms to all clients during the peak period of these incidents (weekdays, 3:00pm to 7:00pm).
 - Implementing a capacity limit of the teens/senior's area to 20 during the peak period of these incidents (weekdays, 3:00pm to 7:00pm). Note, with the capacity limit, teens were welcome and encouraged to use alternative spaces in the library, which did occur effectively.
 - Adding a second security guard to help manage the capacity limits.
 - Zero tolerance for horseplay and escalated behaviour.
- Staff recognize the added guard and restricting services is not welcoming. These restrictions were not actioned lightly. The seriousness of the escalated and violent incidents was prioritized in the response planning.
- It is currently the third week of this reset initiative. With the positive and improving response thus far, we are headed towards restoring the services in full gradually.
- In 2022, staff facilitated 84 teen events that saw over 1100 teen participants. Event staff continue to offer structured and drop-in events for teens. Valued community experts and partners, such as Carea Health are involved (Carea Youth Outreach Workers support the Thursday youth afterschool program, however due to resources, are not able to support every week).
- Staff are exploring existing and new partnerships to build on, to increase activities in the teen/adult space with more variety of engagement opportunities that meet a greater variety of interests with respect to teens using the library.
- The recent incidents have also had secondary impacts on other spaces and overall client experiences. During the evening of one of the escalated incidents, there was another incident that took place as staff were closing the building. This incident resulted in the mother of one of the affected clients contacting staff and

the ABRWG to report her concerns, which involved concerns of racial profiling and discrimination. In response to this serious complaint, the CEO responded immediately, met with the parent in-person, and an investigation was conducted which has resulted in corrective action. The parent was supportive of the response received and in response to further discussion, information was provided about PABRT and the ABRWG.

- Reminder, as discussed and determined by the ABRWG, the abrwg@pickeringlibrary.ca email is monitored by the Staff Liaison and any incoming emails are reported to the ABRWG at the proceeding monthly meeting (with the exception of spam or misdirected content). In this case, the parent did confirm during the in-person meeting, that she wanted her email to be shared with the group.
- ABRWG members reviewed and approved the Vice Chair's drafted response. The response will be provided to the Staff Liaison, who will email the response through the abrwg@pickeringlibrary.ca account.

Incident Feedback from ABRWG members:

- This is a broader societal issue right now. Schools are experiencing youth conflict and violence (and are seeing these issues at the school age level too). Despite the existing expertise and resources in schools, there are similar limitations on the impact of responses right now.
- The resources needed to support these youth challenges are being explored in other local sectors, however resources are ultimately being stretched across community stakeholders looking to the same youth-focused experts for help.
- Support from members was shared for the hard and fast restrictions on the teen/adult space. These actions demonstrate a serious response, timely response, and contribute to restoring rules and safe space.
- Members see there are a lot of youth that use the library. That is a good thing. Want youth to go back to feeling it's a safe space.
- Staff safety and wellbeing are also important, and it sounds like the reset actions kept that in mind.
- Confidentiality question was raised regarding the parent's email. The client confirmed their intention was for her email to be shared with members of the ABRWG. A reminder that ABRWG minutes are shared publicly online via the ABRWG landing page (www.pickeringlibrary.ca/abrwg), so all notes captured in the minutes reflect information that can be publicly shared.

5. ABRWG 2022 Recommendations - Collections Check-In

- The Collections Teams shared updates pertaining to the progress made thus far for the ABRWG recommendations determined last year.
- The update was overall well received with continued support from the ABRWG.
- Presentation slides with the details will be circulated to the group.
- Some questions arose related to Collections promotions opportunities and ideas. These will be further explored at the May meeting, as the Marketing Team will be attending to facilitate a Collections and Events promotions focused conversation. Collections staff have been invited to join that conversation alongside the Marketing Team.

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6. Youth Subcommittee Update
 - The subcommittee is satisfied with the volume of input received at this time.
 - Survey results are being reviewed and a summary will be shared once the group is ready to highlight key conclusions and takeaways.

 7. Proclamation Subcommittee Update (ABR Identifier Collaboration with PABRT)
 - After further discussion regarding the desired approach to creating the identifier, the subcommittee working group has identified a need to seek expertise and support from additional City staff. The Corporate Communications and the Public Art departments have been engaged and will each provide a team member to join the subcommittee working group.
 - This has resulted in a pivot with respect to timelines. With the recognition of the necessary scale and scope of work to appropriately conduct the artistic process, community consultations, and appropriate compensation structure, the timelines and budget scoping need to be revised.
 - The August 31st event, featuring PABRT and the ABRWG will still proceed. In lieu of it being the launch of the ABR identifier, staff will conduct a teen engagement activity involving t-shirts and art materials. Teens will be invited to create their own t-shirts, with their own artistic designs representing anti-Black racism. Photos of their final artwork will be taken and collected as consultation input and provided to the artist tasked with creating the final ABR identifier. It will be expected that the t-shirt photos represent some youth voices and should contribute to shaping the final ABR identifier.
 - The subcommittee working group will be reconvened in May.

 8. Events Submission Forms Feedback Exercise
 - Appreciation was shared to the group for their feedback during the in-depth conversation about the event submission form. Reflecting all the input provided by the ABRWG, the events submission form has been revised. A copy of the latest draft has been emailed to the group (from Shahin).
 - Please send any further feedback directly to Shahin via the email thread.
 - Pending no further changes, the revised form will go live soon.

 9. New Strategic Plan – Consultation – Deferred, timeline TBD
 - The consultation action plan is delayed and timelines have not been finalized.
 - The ABRWG Work Plan will be updated once more firmed dates are available.

 10. ABRWG Public Presentations
 - There is continued interest to share the work of the ABRWG with other libraries and community colleagues. As such, we will continue to apply for speaking and sharing opportunities.
 - The next application we're working on is for the Public Library Association (PLA) Conference. PLA brings together public library professionals from across North America.
 - Staff will continue to explore other opportunities to share this collaborative learning journey and working group model with other interested libraries.