



Early in the spring of 2013, ATA Red Deer City Local No. 60 President Kelly Aleman issued a challenge for interested persons to establish a DEHR (Diversity, Equity, and Human Rights) Committee for the Local. Patti Yackulic and Nathan Good naively decided to tackle the task. At the time, they had absolutely no notion of the magnitude of their undertaking.

What exactly is a DEHR Committee? In the case of the Local 60 group, the Committee is an ongoing Ad Hoc committee which is mandated to protect the rights of staff and students regarding the three pillars: diversity, equity, and human rights. In doing so, the group tackled numerous projects inclusive of: LGBTQ policies for staff and students; Safe Spaces training; Freedom to Read Week events; Information Fairs; and Wellness Fairs. The Committee was recognized for their efforts in August 2014 when they received the ATA DEHR Award. Recognition for the importance of their LGBTQ work arrived in the spring of 2015 when the Manitoba Teachers Society requested DEHR participation in a national research study.

The 2015-2016 school term promises to be an extremely eventful period for the ATA Red Deer City Local No. 60 DEHR Committee, and, thus, employees of Red Deer Public Schools. Several projects initiated last year either continue this year, or will be back in even better stead this year. Hence, please watch for announcements posted on RDPSD News throughout the year. Please note that funding for DEHR projects stems from the ATA Local 60 (slightly less than half the total DEHR budget), the RDPSD, an ATA DEHR Grant (about a quarter of operating dollars), and a KRAZE Radio Seed Grant.

- **Safe Spaces training is a key component of the DEHR/RDPSD ongoing LGBTQ initiative. On October 28, Dr. Kris Wells** (Faculty Director, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies & Services and Assistant Professor, Education Policy Studies, University of Alberta) **will lead RDPSD teachers, counselors, social workers, and Community Liaison Workers through the particulars of establishing school environments conducive to ensuring that LGBTQ staff, students, parents, allies, and advocates are met with friendly environments.** The DEHR Committee has supplied each school with Safe Spaces stickers to mount on classroom doors in addition to a Safe Spaces poster for the school.
- Also, the DEHR Committee is committed to improving conditions for LGBTQ employees and students through additional ventures: continued work with the District to ensure that **LGBTQ policies** are passed by the Board - hopefully, later this year; creation of a resource guide; hosting the **PRISM: Professionals Respecting Individual (and Gender) Minorities session**; collaborating with community groups to establish a **regional PFlag and an advisory committee**; and, along with the City of Red Deer, **advocating businesses to be welcoming to all marginalized individuals.**

- **Professional development** addressing the tenets of diversity, equity, and human rights is so important to DEHR Committee members that the committee joined forces with the PD Committee to offer the **Promoting the Success of Immigrant Students and Families session**. Each school has been supplied with poster from the Alberta Human Rights Commission. Throughout the year, the DEHR Committee will post, on Red Deer Public News, information about various important United Nations days.
- Since the **Salvation Army** will return with the weekend backpack program funded by the **Christmas Kettles**, the DEHR Committee will again organize one December evening for RDPSD teachers to man the kettles.
- February brings **Freedom to Read Week**, February 21 to 27. **Poster contests** will return for students in **Grades 4 to 6 and Grades 7 to 9**. **Grades 10 to 12** students will be eligible to enter a **video contest**. Draws in each category will determine winners to receive tablets. As well, the DEHR Committee is collaborating with RDPL Dawe Branch to offer the second annual **Freedom to Read Week Fireside Chat on February 24, 2016**. This particular session promises to be controversial and fascinating as a court case which serves as a Canadian precedent for freedom of speech in the media involving a former RDPSD teacher vs. a youth minister (Lund vs. Boissoin) is discussed with Guillermo Barron from RDC moderating.
- The DEHR Committee organized sessions with Darren Lund at the 2014 District March PD day. Again this March, DEHR will have input in the District event.
- When Patti Yackulic and Nathan Good established the DEHR Committee in 2013, the raison d'etre was to **address poverty**. Life, as usual, grasped hold of the Committee, and priorities temporarily shifted. Committee members are pleased that poverty is now the key focus as the committee collaborates with the RDPSD to tackle a variety of issues which touch our schools in significant ways.

Since the DEHR Committee functions to enhance positive experiences in the RDPSD community, Committee members welcome input from District staff as plans for the year are founded. Committee members can be reached at:

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