Guests:
Bluesette Campbell & Anna McQuarrie
Parents & Advocates for Inclusive Education

Bluesette Campbell and her family reside in rural Northwest SK. When her son Andrew was born in 2002, Bluesette’s focus was shifted to the world of disability. Andrew lives with diagnoses such as DiGeorge Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder among others. While the road has been bumpy, Bluesette sees much potential as Andrew finished high school, is employed full time and has dreams of moving to the big city of Saskatoon. Much of this potential may have been missed if not for the support of Inclusion Saskatchewan. Bluesette co-founded a not-for-profit organization in the Meadow Lake area that supports families with exceptional children, PACE Inc. in 2009. PACE made inclusive education a priority and had been committed to increase the quality of inclusive education by partnering with their school division for the past four years. She has been SK’s rep at Inclusion Canada for three years and is honored to be part of INSK and the national federation and is committed to supporting it in whatever capacity she can.

Anna MacQuarrie has worked in the disability rights movement for almost two decades. Based in Halifax, Canada, Anna is a mom to three kids with disabilities. As a parent of children with disabilities, she understands the important role families play in fostering inclusion and the need for families to have a strong voice. She has worked with Inclusion International and Inclusion Canada to advance and promote the rights and inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families around the world. Anna was actively involved in the development of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and has worked extensively on its implementation internationally.
Key Issues in this Chat Session:

1. **Inclusive schools for an Inclusive Society?**: Bluesette describes the classroom as a microscopic version of society. She stresses that to create the society we envision, inclusion must happen within the school and classroom.

2. **Resources and Supports**: To support students, Anna asserts that teachers and schools need supports and assured access to necessary resources. Sometimes this means that parents need to advocate for their child by advocating for supports for the teacher and school.

3. **Policy Vision to Classroom Reality**: Policy changes are critical, but do not always lead to inclusive education. Translating policy into practice takes a great deal of effort and attention, as is the case for Anna in Nova Scotia.

4. **Partnerships and Communication**: Bluesette and Anna share their experience of poor communication between parents and schools leading to inconsistencies and deficiencies in the level of inclusion for students.

5. **Strengthening Communication**: In Bluesette’s Saskatchewan community, a group of parents, and the local school authority cooperatively facilitated a partnership by funding a “communication support associate” to build and sustain effective communication between families and the school. Strategic planning enabled the development of strong partnerships between families and the school, resulting in better outcomes for the students.

6. **Strategic Support for Parents**: Anna and Bluesette both state the importance of support for families as they navigate through the structures of the school system. Parent networks are extremely valuable for sharing knowledge and building confidence for this task. Sharing knowledge and building community resources are both critical steps in sustaining inclusion in schools.

Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. Do you think parents of children who experience barriers to learning encounter similar challenges with schooling? How are they the same? How might they be different?

2. Do parents need to be strong and assertive advocates for their child to be included? Should this be necessary?
Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. What factors do Bluesette and Anna both experience in the effort to ensure inclusion for the child(ren)? What do you consider the most promising approach to accomplish this?
2. What role can parent networks play in helping families struggling to make inclusion work well?
3. Do you think teachers and school leaders fully appreciate the stress and anxiety parents experience when their child’s progress in school is problematic? How might this be improved?
4. Do you think a “Parent-School” communication role would be a helpful addition to the education team if it would bring stronger partnerships to ensure student success?

More Resources:

- Inclusion: Myths and Misconceptions, Catalyst for Inclusive Education

- Essential Elements to Promote Inclusive Education, Catalyst for Inclusive Education
  https://bit.ly/3H4v5Lm