Intro: Welcome to the SAC Shining Lights S-LP Schools podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Lisa Archibald from Western University. As you know, many speech-language pathologists in Canada are employed in schools. Their job is to support children with communication disabilities in accessing the curriculum and achieving their academic and personal potential. It's a challenging job. So many schools, so many students and not many SLPs. Across the country, S-LPs are finding unique solutions to providing the best possible services to the students and school teams with whom they work. In this podcast, our guests describe their innovations in school-based speech language pathology. Thanks for listening, as we shine a light on some brilliant projects.

Lisa Archibald:
Here we are on the Shining Lights podcast today, and I'm really pleased to welcome Debbie Maund. Debbie, would you introduce yourself, please?

Debbie Maund:
Sure. Thanks, Lisa. I'm Debbie Maund, I'm a speech-language pathologist living in Moncton, New Brunswick, which is part of the traditional Mi'kmaq territory. And I have a private practice called SpeechPATH4U, and I split my time between a clinic here in Moncton and Elsipogtog School, which is about an hour north of here on Elsipogtog First Nation And my company has the contract with the Education Authority in that community to provide their speech language services.

Lisa Archibald:
Right. All right, thanks. Could you tell us more about that school based service then? What does the service delivery model look like?

Debbie Maund:
Well, the service delivery model is one that I think is an evolving one. We're August as we record this, so next month I will head into my ninth school year at that school. And when I first was approached about providing some services it was for a very specific project. They had some funding and wanted to get a better sense of their K4 population. So translating for those in Ontario, that's a JK equivalent program. And I provided some basic assessment and intervention services there. And over the course of time working with the administration in that setting they've asked for more services and eventually gave me the responsibility for providing all of the services for as far as speech and language goes for the school. So I provide some consultation with teachers and EA responsible for training in that setting. Do some direct services in terms of pullout small groups I do, I'm really lucky to be able to work with some teachers who are quite keen to do some collaborative work. So we do full class language based vocabulary, building storytelling. I also wear a hat other than speech language pathology in that setting. I'm the specialist services coordinator. So coordinate education, training and services for our rehab team as well as, and the go-to between administration and the rehab team in terms of questions, in terms of needs advocating for services and those kinds of things.
Lisa Archibald:
All right, Debbie, thanks so much. So can you tell us a little bit more about those resources? It's all in one site, and what are the resources that are available there in terms of supporting the children's learning?

Debbie Maund:
Yeah, we are really lucky. It's a community based school. It is a K to eight school but we, as I said, also have a JK program or a K4 program. We call it our nursery program. So we have just under 400 students at the school. And from nursery to grade four, we have three classrooms at each grade level. The goal is to keep class sizes small, and the school is open to students who are from the Elsipogtog community. So that means I go to one school. I have a full-time speech pathologist who works with me. She's there full-time as well. We have a part-time ot, or sorry, part-time physio who works three days a week, full-time OT, two full-time OT PT assistants with literacy support team, math support team, behavior intervention, autism support, as well as all of the other services that you would expect to see at school. But our specialist team is quite large. We have a part-time psychologist who does educational testing and a psychologist there who does some testing, but mostly intervention and counseling.

Lisa Archibald:
Wow, that's quite a team.

Debbie Maund:
It is. I call us a little bit of a unicorn, and we are much envied by many of my colleagues who are working in the provincial system and in private practice in other settings.

Lisa Archibald:
It's a unique school itself. Can you tell us a little bit more about the school itself?

Debbie Maund:
It is a very unique school. It used to be band run, but in the last year and a half, two years after a number of years of work on the part of the Education Authority, it is now an independent education authority. So the Elsipogtog First Nation Education Authority. They have a direct partnership with the federal government for funding for services and the school administration, the Education Authority. They decide basically what services, how things happen within the school setting. They do work closely with the provincial government. We are within the same geographical area as Anglophone North School District. So lots of partnerships there and lots of liaising. But one of the big reasons that we have such an extensive resource team is that the Education Authority recognized the unique and special needs of many of the students at the school and decided to put their emphasis in ensuring that those services were there on an asne basis, and so that we can provide those services directly to the students. Right. Wow,
That sounds like a really interesting place to be. Debbie you started out then nine years ago, you said, What are the major challenges that you felt when you were coming into set up services there in that community?

Debbie Maund:
Well, I laugh because as a speech-language pathologist who had been working for a number of years before coming into this setting, I've worked in other environments where you think, Oh man, it feels like administration is trying to put us into a box. And I recognize funding and those kinds of things help to impose some of those restrictions. But then I come into this setting and they say, Well, you're the expert. You set it up how you feel needs to be. So I really came in with a blank slate in many ways and have been lucky on one side and challenged on the other to create a system that I feel is responsive to the needs of the school. So in many cases, I do still feel that it is a work in progress trying to respond to the changing population, to any of the changes that are coming in. For example, last school year was our first year in a brand new building, so we had lots of new facilities, lots of great space. So that changes what we're able to offer in terms of small groups, for example. So that's been a great caseload management tool because in the old school, we really were wanting for space. Now we don't have that in quite so many ways. Another change that we've seen with the new school is the introduction, or as I'm told historically, a reintroduction of Mi'kmaq immersion. So the nursery students, the four year olds are coming in and they have a hundred percent of their daily instruction in Mi'kmaq. I know a few words and a few greetings but really don't know the language very well. So that's shifted how I am looking at trying to support the needs, the communication needs of that population really looking at working much more closely with those teachers and students who are fluent in the language. And that's been one of the huge advantages of being at one school multiple days a week over many, many years is I get to work alongside, work with many members of the community who have been so very gracious with their time and very patient as well to help guide in terms of culture, cultural sensitivity in terms of needs of the community and understanding, because it isn't my culture and I'm very aware of that. And so want to be not coming in imposing my views, my values, I come in with a skill set and I want to use that within the context and make sure that it's as authentic as possible.

Lisa Archibald:
Yeah, interesting. I'm gonna follow up with one quick question I think is for the children arriving into the K4 group is their first language Mi'kmaq at that point?

Debbie Maund:
Interesting. Because mostly yes or no, sorry, mostly no. And in the spring we screen all of our kiddos who are coming into the school because it helps us with planning and recognizing where there might be some particular needs for services. And this year we screened in the range of 25 to 30 students in June and two children, I would actually say our first language Mi'kmaq. That's what we would consider after consulting with my SLP colleague. Certainly their language knowledge because their parents speak Mi'kmaq at home and they have grandparents who also speak Mi'kmaq. Many other
children are coming in with exposure to Mi'kmaq. There's happy to say such a great effort to reintroduce the language within the community and many of, not the parent generation, but more the grandparent generation are working hard with their grandchildren to expose them to that language. And so they're learning more of the words and coming in with a little bit more of a basis, but mostly the students coming in are English first language.

Lisa Archibald:
I See. Right. So you mentioned that, you know, mentioned that you are not a member of the community, and so when you were arriving there, you had these opportunities to learn about the community from members that were there and began to think about how to situate your expertise within that. So what are some of the lessons? What are some of the things that really informed you about how to situate speech and language services in that setting?

Debbie Maund:
Well, my number one I guess approach, and certainly it's the advice that I give to new staff, new team members coming in, especially if they're coming in from outside the community, is we're born with two ears and one mouth, and we should use them in that proportion. Listening to understand is really, really been a valuable tool for me because by listening, by observing, I think that you really get to start to see what's going on, what's needed. And by not coming in pushing my agenda, dictating coming in as the expert saying, this is how it's going to be, I feel that I have earned some trust from the community members, from the people that I work with. And while I do have a strong skill set in speech and language, that's not all that's needed in this setting because as speech-language pathologists, we know communication has to be functional, it has to be real for the individuals, and what is real to me isn't necessarily real and functional to the kids that I'm seeing. And so really taking the time to understand what's needed, to learn from my professional peers has been probably the best strategy. And having been there for so long, the kids, my office in the new school is adjacent to the main door where the students from nursery to grade three get dropped off on the bus in the morning, and kids will stop by my office on the way in and greet me and tell me how their hockey game went on the weekend or show me that they lost a tooth. And that's one of the greatest gifts that I have received from being in this one school over the course of a number of school years, is I've gotten to know the kids and the grade seven students, the current grade seven students were the first students that I met as four year olds. And many of them are still keen to come to speech language services, and they want their turn. And so I've met, I know families now, several siblings in the same household, and it's, it's been a really wonderful gift that way. And I think that, I hope that I give as much as I receive in that setting.

Lisa Archibald:
Yeah. Very nice. Are there some particular guides or what are in place at the school to help guide folks in that are coming in from outside the community or within the school itself in terms of that cultural value and practice?
Debbie Maund:
Well kind of have two sets of, I'll use the word tools loosely, we'll say systems that might be a better way to capture it. Over the last three or four years I've worked with my S-LP, physio and OT colleagues and the literacy and math support teams to refine, and again, it's a work in progress a system of screening our students who are coming new into the school. So at the nursery and kindergarten level it allows us to get to know the students a little bit before school actually starts this year, one of the things we were able to introduce is we had a school bus parked outside on our screening days, so the kids got to go in with their parents on the school bus. So this big yellow bus wasn't quite so scary in those settings. But it's a screening process that is very much informal. We've derived it from norm based information, but we're also always trying to tweak it a little bit to make it more culturally sensitive and responsive. But as I said, that allows us to get to know the students and their needs so that when we are planning for the upcoming school year, we have this information can meet with school and education authority administration to really be able to make sure that we're putting things in place. Beyond that, we have what is called the Medicine Wheel Student Index, which is developed or was developed by Dr. Lori Cox who is a director of our Eastern Door Clinic. And this tool is one that we use on an ongoing basis, but every spring it's a tool that is distributed to the classroom teachers and the teachers are asked to provide some feedback on a very large number. I haven't counted the domains, but a large number of domains as they relate to students successes, where the students excel and where there might be some gaps. And so each classroom teacher is asked to look at that tool. Each specialist in their domain is asked to look at that tool. And then as a group of specialists along with the administration, we meet every spring and we talk about every student in the school and use that information along with the other information that is available to us to help plan for individual student needs, whether they need an assessment for speech and language or for physio, whether they need some more support in literacy or in math as well as a collective. For example, there might seem to be in a given year, a particular need in a particular area. So that might shift or help administration shift their thinking about realignment of resources. And it's really quite an interesting tool in the sense that the goal is that no child is falling in the cracks, and that each child is treated as their own person, and that we're looking at the whole child, not just problems that might exist or skills that they might be missing, but that we look at their gifts, where they're excelling, as well as where we can provide some extra support.

Lisa Archibald:
Will we be able to link to a picture of the Medicine Wheel itself that you're using with the show notes?

Debbie Maund:
I will double check with Dr. Cox that it's okay to send along a copy of that and we'll be able to, I'm sure, be able to give at least a bit of a snapshot of what that looks like.

Lisa Archibald:
Yeah, that would be lovely. I'm sure the listeners would like to see it. So you mentioned that it has a number of domains it has that you're really looking at each of those areas.

Debbie Maund:
So think of the whole person and what makes the whole person skills in math, skills in reading skills in physical education we also look at their communication skills at, do they need glasses or is that something that we need to do? The teachers commenting that they seem to be squinting or they're complaining of headaches. Well, oops, maybe we need to take a look at that and make sure that we're making arrangements or helping parents make arrangements to get their vision checked. I have a portable audiometer, so I do often get referrals from the teachers or from parents themselves. My child seems to be having some difficulty, so we can screen their hearing at the school setting and if need be, then we refer on. But it also takes a look at social, emotional, artistic, as I said, a whole range of domains.

Lisa Archibald:
And that's a big investment. How does that work in practice? How does it happen?

Debbie Maund:
A lot of coffee, and a lot of teamwork. The resource teachers are great. One in particular. She and I have worked together over the last number of years to refine the data entry and data collection. And she actually spends, I'm sure, many, many hours long hours inputting all of the information. It is an electronic format for the teachers to be able to go in. So we do training with the teachers every year just to refresh their memories because our memories over the course of the year tend to fade a little bit. So we always have a little bit of a training time, just review of the tool. If there have been any changes made, then we address those same thing with the specialist team. And then typically the teachers and specialists are given about a month and we time that with any kind of deadlines for reporting at the end of the school year, because there are always those. So we try to make sure that they have their time to really deliberate and get their information in a non rushed kind of fashion. Also, allowing ourselves enough time to receive all of the data and compile that and get it into a report format that is a little bit more user friendly as we go through our meeting day. And it has been a full day. Although after last, this last spring, I thought maybe we should take a look at breaking it up a little bit differently because it is a lot of information to cover in a short period of time, and we want to make sure that we're doing our best, putting our best effort in.

Lisa Archibald:
But the whole team would review the 400 students. Yes, there that in a long chunk of time, full day. And maybe you have to think about whether that's the right way to do that, but that's the way that would happen. And that is in addition to of regular report cards or that teachers are always feeling a crunch around and then this is in addition to that?

Debbie Maund:
Yes, it is. .
Lisa Archibald:
Wow. Yeah. This has some ties to, you mentioned Dr. Cox is the creator she's from your....

Debbie Maund:
Eastern Door Clinic.

Lisa Archibald:
Right. Okay. And there's a connection between you in some way?

Debbie Maund:
Yes. The Eastern Door Clinic is separate, but not really. It is a standalone clinic. Dr. Cox is the director and there is a small staff attached to the clinic, but the clinical staff doing the assessments for this, think of it as a complex case clinic. So there, our referrals are made to the clinic for students within the community who are struggling in multiple areas, whether that's development, whether that's academic, whether it's socioeconomic, whether it is mental health, significant struggles in multiple areas where parents are looking for support, guardians, grandparents are looking for support or they're identified at the school as well. So that's where the connect part of the connection is. But the clinical team conducting those assessments is the same clinical team that provides services at the school. I see. It is the first clinic east of Manitoba to have engaged in a process for assessing fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. And although that isn't the only diagnosis that we're looking at assessing for it certainly is one of them. There is a separate clinic in Dieppe locally here, and they are the center of excellence for FASD, and that is their sole diagnostic responsibility. And there are some definite links between the Eastern Door Clinic and the Center of Excellence.

Lisa Archibald:
Yes, we, We'll come back to the medicine wheel if we can for a minute, Debbie. And I'm thinking about now how you're using that to inform your own speech and language programming.

Debbie Maund:
Yeah. If you think about the concept of two eyed seeing, the idea that there is the clinical side of where our training I draw from my training, but then there's also the cultural and spiritual side of the community and those needs and my responsibility as a clinician to integrate, to respect that, first of all and to integrate that into my work. And as I said earlier the notion of listening more than you're talking, to really be able to understand how, what's important. And I mean, in some ways that's not all that different from what I would be doing in any other setting to be true to the work that I'm doing. I should really be listening to what are those needs? What are the big referral questions? And because my practice is pediatric, what are the parents or guardians really looking for at this process? But the extra layer is really trying to be culturally aware, culturally sensitive, recognizing that there are differences. And some of say the vocabulary or some of the language structures that might be important to me from my training and
clinical background aren’t necessarily so from a different cultural or perspective background. And one of the reasons that I have on my to-do list learning Miꞌkmaq is to better understand some of those differences because there are grammatical differences. There are certainly linguistic and phonological differences that I feel it’s my responsibility to learn about and better understand especially with the reintroduction of Miꞌkmaq immersion. Because as the students start to speak both languages more than I feel my responsibility to better understand that and be able to make the necessary adjustments in my practice for that.

Lisa Archibald:
You mentioned that there is some direct services going on and I'm just wondering there, what are some of the tools that you find you'll that effective or the right fit for your community group? What do those sessions look like? What are the kinds of goals you're addressing there?

Debbie Maund:
Vocabulary building is certainly one storytelling and that comes not only from my training as a speech-language pathologist, but that’s very much a cultural norm as well. So storytelling is a big part of what I do. I love wordless picture books, and that’s a tool that I’ve worked with especially with some of the nursery teachers. It’s Great. Because it doesn't matter whether it's English, Miꞌkmaq, French, or whatever other language. It's a great tool. I use story champs as a program a lot and that's one of the tools that I use for some of my full class based work, and integrating a lot of storytelling and the vocabulary within that. And we have so much fun and the kids really look forward to those times.

Lisa Archibald:
Nice. Now, what about the challenges of assessment then, Debbie? Can you talk about in the setting where you've got the Miꞌkmaq immersion going on, and you are asked to, it's determine if this child is having difficulties with language learning or not. What are the challenges? How are you managing there?

Debbie Maund:
Well not surprising to many of my colleagues who work in Indigenous communities or in other minority communities one of the big challenges is that the tools that we have to use as professionals are not normed on the population that I'm working with. In the case of Eastern Door Clinic, where I am required to provide percentile, ranks and some other very concrete information for the various places that my reports end up through that setting I'm strongly encouraged to use the tools, the everyday tools, like the self, the TILLS, The Goldman Fristoe and report on those numbers. But it's always with a little bit of discomfort that I do that. And obviously with a line that does state that these tools are not normed on this particular population. I do end up using a combination of tools in both formal and informal, because I do find that the informal tools allow for a little bit more freedom of movement, if you will. I would love to be able to have some kind of an informal tool that is truly designed with a cultural and linguistic perspective that is more fitting to the community. That would be one of my long term dreams. But time and
energy and all of those things come into play. But someday that would be my goal. Yeah.

Lisa Archibald:
Well, when you’re sitting down with a child like that, what’s your favorite quick little assessment task that you do that really this gets a child talking, this is what tells me about their talking. What do you find?

Debbie Maund:
Oh, do you know, I have this wheel. It’s a wooden spinning wheel that I got at Ikea, and I have this overlay that I put on it. I have a few different overlays, and that’s what I, because the kids love to spin the wheel, and I usually put it at the other end of my office. They have to get up and they have to move around and go spin it and come back. And so it gives me an idea of following directions and how easily are they able to sit and how easily are they able to shift their focus from getting up and across and coming back. But I have sort of an adaptation of the expanding expression tool so some questions around vocabulary. And then I have some stuff about ‘wh’ questions. So whether it’s some storytelling or some vocabulary based stuff that really does give me a good view of where they’re at and maybe where our work needs to delve a little bit deeper because it is, as I said, an activity that they just love and ask for. Because if I put it up high on the shelf out of reach, they know it’s there and they see it’s there. Well, can we spin the wheel today?

Lisa Archibald:
Lovely. Really, really nice. And I think you had said earlier that there are some particular vocabulary areas where the community really has strengths in. And I think that also is an important consideration, is not absolutely so much the sort of standardized vocabulary because there might be real vocabulary strengths in some, and so that you might be an indicator.

Debbie Maund:
Yes. This is a community where many of the guardians, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are fishermen. So they can tell you the difference between lobster and crab and snow crab and different kinds of fishing vessels, animals. That’s where I’ve been very fortunate to learn most of the Mi’kmaq vocabulary that I have learned is with animals and lots of land-based learning. And the school is in a rural community. So some of the, while, of course many of the students do get to come to Moncton to movies and hop, skip and jump and McDonalds and those kinds of things, they do spend a lot of time at the beach and swimming. So the vocabulary is reflective of that.

Lisa Archibald:
Right, and I think that’s an important consideration in assessment.

Debbie Maund:
It certainly is. Yeah.
Lisa Archibald:
Well, I think you've touched on this a little bit, but maybe you'll kind of sum us up. What's your next challenge Debbie you said you're always evolving your service. What are you working on now?

Debbie Maund:
Well as we head into September, I do need to turn my attention back to my caseload because I've taken a little bit of a break from that for the last few weeks. But to take a look at how to really - it is a big caseload. I have in the range of 150 students on the caseload that of course I'm not solely responsible for. I do have my full-time colleague, but between the two of us, how do we manage that? How do we do it? How do we provide good services in a responsible, responsive culturally appropriate way to make sure that the students are getting what they need. As I said, one of my long-term dreams is to develop or to refine, I guess is probably the better word, the screening tool that we use so that it is a little bit more authentic. And my personal challenge is to learn more Miꞌkmaq because as I said before, as speech-language pathologist in that setting, I do feel it's my responsibility to learn more about the language and to be able to communicate a little bit more effectively than I am. I can greet you, I can say good morning, but I do need to learn a little bit more about the language.

Lisa Archibald:
And that brings us nicely into a question about colleagues who might be working in settings where they're from a different community or the individuals they're serving are from a different community. What, what's a piece of advice you'd give to them?

Debbie Maund:
Find somebody from the community that can be an ally and listen to them, really to learn from them and not to be afraid to ask questions. Because that's one of the things that I have learned that my colleagues from the community are really proud of their culture and really want to share that culture and really want, to want people to learn and want to understand. We have a great opportunity here in the next few weeks. There are powwows in most of the First Nations communities throughout the summer, and they also book powwow is Labor Day Weekend. And that is open to everybody, as I've been reminded. So it's a great opportunity for non-community members to go and to experience some of the beauty and joy of the music and the dancing and the drumming and the culture, and to really start to appreciate what is there. So very close to home.

Lisa Archibald:
Yeah. Thanks, Debbie. Thanks for that. All right. Let's finish up now. Just a couple of the final questions that we have for all our guests. How do you and your colleagues support one another in the work that you do?

Debbie Maund:
We have text chat circle where we send out random messages. We meet on a regular basis. And that's one of the things that I'm looking at for this year is how to shift that,
how to get better support as our team gets bigger. Because that was certainly something last year there were several new team members, and this fall we'll have some new team members through maternity leaves and some other life situations. We'll have new faces around the table. So trying to look at, do we do case studies? Do we do something akin to rounds? But we do have regular opportunities to sit and to share and to brainstorm. And then there are, hopefully with Covid restrictions the way they are and maybe loosening a little bit more, there are always opportunities for some social gatherings within the school. And those are pretty special opportunities too.

Lisa Archibald:
For sure, for sure. And can I invite you to tell us about one of your favorite outside of work activities?

Debbie Maund:
Travel. I collect passport stamps.

Lisa Archibald:
Nice. Well, that, that's always a really get away from it and change your headset. Absolutely. Type of activity, for sure. Yeah. Debbie, that's been a lovely conversation. I've really enjoyed hearing about the work that you're doing and the program and plans that you have in place. Thank you so much for joining us on the podcast today.

Debbie Maund:
Well, thanks so much for the opportunity.

Outro: Thank you for listening to the SAC Shining Lights S-LP Schools podcast. You can find all podcasts, transcripts, and links to the episode resources on the SAC website that's at sac-oac.ca. If you'd like to be a guest on the podcast, or you'd like to suggest a guest, please email the host Lisa Archibald at larchiba@uwo.ca that's L A R C H I B a @ uwa.ca. You can listen to our podcasts on all of the major podcast servers. If you liked this episode, be sure to give it a thumbs up on your platform and share it through your social media and other channels.