

DATE: June 14, 2016

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: National Aboriginal Day

ORIGINATOR: Dr. Sandra Stoddard, Executive Director, Governance, Strategic Services and Support for Schools

RESOURCE STAFF: Jennifer Allen, Melissa Purcell

REFERENCE: [HAA.BP Aboriginal Education](#)
[HAA.AR Aboriginal Education](#)
[PhotoVoice Project](#)

ISSUE

Recognition of National Aboriginal Day at Board.

BACKGROUND

In 1996, former Governor General Roméo A. Leblanc proclaimed June 21 to be marked each year in Canada as National Aboriginal Day. This date was selected to reflect Aboriginal Peoples' observance of the summer solstice, an important time for many within Aboriginal communities. The significance of the event acknowledges the rights of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada and celebrates the contributions and histories of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit in Canada.

Edmonton Public School board has honoured National Aboriginal Day for the past nine years at the public board meeting, which is closest to June 21. An informal meal is also provided for the Board of Trustees, the Administration and other staff. Each year a new teaching is introduced in collaboration with local Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Advisors and the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education staff.

CURRENT SITUATION

This year's teaching focusses on the health and wellbeing of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. This year students across the District engaged in *The PhotoVoice Project* which involved the use of photography and group dialogue as a means for marginalized individuals to deepen the understanding of their identity and the world around them. PhotoVoice equips individuals with cameras so they can create photographic evidence and symbolic representations to transfer knowledge, offer insight, teach others about their experiences and help others see the world through their eyes. Visual images and accompanying stories became tools for what the students want educators to know about their health and wellbeing. It is hoped that this project will help to improve conditions for students by inspiring change at the community and school level.

Students used PhotoVoice this year to showcase what they want educators, to know about their health and well-being. The images and ideas are those of the youth involved, what is important, concerning, and of interest to them. The visuals that were created captured their individual perspectives and their voices. It offered students an opportunity to tell their stories and have their voices heard.

The PhotoVoice Project involved First Nations, Métis, and Inuit high school students from Ross Sheppard, Eastglen, W. P. Wagner, M.E. LaZerte and Victoria School of the Arts, Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC) and Idea Factory.

KEY POINTS

- Recognition of the District's continued support of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and culture through education and collaborative partnerships is an important annual event.
- Culturally responsive resources are being developed by students to share perspectives on health and well-being for educators to use.

JA:cs