

**DATE:** June 9, 2015

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** National Aboriginal Day

**ORIGINATOR:** Mary Michailides, Assistant Superintendent, Support for Schools

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Eileen Marthiensen, Melissa Purcell

**REFERENCE:** [HAA.BP Aboriginal Education](#)  
[HAA.AR Aboriginal Education](#)  
[Blanket Exercise Information](#)  
[Blanket Exercise video](#)

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#### **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.

The Blanket Exercise, that members of the Board of Trustees and the Administration participated in prior to the board meeting, is a highly interactive process from KAIROS Canada. This process assisted in building understanding of how the history of treaty-making and colonization of Canada impacted First Nations, Métis, and Inuit throughout the years and continues to impact First Nations, Métis, and Inuit today. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit lead teachers throughout the District have participated in the Blanket Exercise.

The Blanket Exercise was created 15 years ago, the Aboriginal Rights Coalition worked with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Elders and teachers to develop an interactive way of learning the history most Canadians are never taught. The Blanket Exercise was the result; it has since been offered thousands of times and was last completely updated in 2013. The script that was used had been adapted to include information from Edmonton and surrounding area, as a result of collaboration with Edmonton Catholic and Edmonton Public Schools, Elders and KAIROS Canada.

The Blanket Exercise uses blankets to represent the lands of what is now called Canada, and the distinct cultures and nations which live on those lands to this day. Participants represented the First Peoples; when they move onto the blankets, they were taken back in time to the arrival of the Europeans. The Narrator and a European worked with the

participants to read a script, while the exercise went through the history of treaty-making, colonization and resistance that resulted in the nation we call Canada. In closing, participants reflected on how the exercise increased their understanding of historical and contemporary realities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, families and community members through a sharing circle.

In partnership with the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Catholic Schools, The Journey to Reconciliation Youth Leadership Conference was held at the Shaw Conference Centre on March 27, 2015. It was the first anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Alberta National Event. The Journey to Reconciliation Youth Leadership Conference brought together more than 700 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth and young adults to explore the concept of reconciliation. The students came from Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools and post-secondary institutions across Edmonton. An educational video of the conference was prepared and will be used for professional learning opportunities. This educational video will be shared with the Board of Trustees and the Administration.

#### **CURRENT SITUATION**

Edmonton Public School board has honoured National Aboriginal Day at the public board meeting closest to June 21 for the past eight years. Each year a new teaching is introduced in collaboration with local Elders and the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education staff. This year's teaching focused on the history of Treaty-Making, Colonization and Reconciliation. An informal luncheon occurred and Board of Trustees, the Administration and other staff members participated in the Blanket Exercise.

#### **KEY POINTS**

- History of Treaty-Making and Colonization continues to impact First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, parents and guardians in the District.
- History of Treaty-Making and Colonization continues to impact relationship between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, parents and guardians in the District and non-First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, parents and guardians in the District.
- Recognition of the District's continued support of Reconciliation through education and collaborative partnerships.

#### **ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES**

N/A

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