



Message from the Superintendent

As the school year ends and the conversation surrounding Truth & Reconciliation continues to be a topic within our school communities, we want to share with you that the Manitoba Catholic School Office, along with the Manitoba Catholic Schools Board of Consultants, is committed to working towards a path of Truth & Reconciliation through dialogue and education. In September of 2020 we introduced a mandatory online training program called *4 Seasons of Reconciliation* for all teachers and support staff. This program was developed in partnership with the First Nations University of Canada, the National Centre for Collaboration; Indigenous Education, and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Over the past few weeks, we have been engaged in meaningful conversations with various families, educators, Indigenous elders, clergy, and our Archbishops. Each brings personal experiences and perspectives to the conversation when asked how we as a Catholic school system can further enter a time of acknowledgment of truth, followed by reconciliation; all while holding true to our own faith and being sensitive to the varying ages of our students. Through these discussions we have established an advisory committee that will work collectively to ensure that we create a safe space for our Indigenous students, families, and educators to share their own experiences and culture as we navigate a new path towards Truth & Reconciliation. This group also acknowledges the responsibility in creating a safe space for our non-Indigenous school community to seek a greater understanding of a time in our history and to seek knowledge of a community that has been generationally marginalized.

This work is going to take time and patience, as the group comes together to establish their priorities and responses to questions and ideas that have been flooding from our various schools. It is also the commitment of the Chair & Vice-Chair of this Advisory Committee to ensure that this work be conducted in a culturally safe and appropriate manner that will ensure the path to Reconciliation includes all members of our Catholic School Community.

The Chair of the Advisory Committee is Marion McKenzie. Marion is a parent of two alumni of St. Alphonsus School where she had served as a Board Member and currently sits on the Manitoba Catholic Schools Board of Consultants. Marion is a proud Indigenous woman with ties to Cross Lake, Manitoba where her Great Grandmother Mary McIvor was a residential school survivor.

The Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee is Christine McInnis, Principal of St. Alphonsus School. Christine has firsthand experience working directly in Indigenous communities, where her experience will help to guide the team with an educational perspective. More importantly, Christine's kind and compassionate heart, along with her desire for learning and social justice will enhance the work of this committee.

We ask for your prayers and support as we continue this journey.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Robert Praznik'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a blue line.

Robert Praznik
Superintendent | Manitoba Catholic Schools
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