



WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION
INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

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September 12, 2014

NEWS RELEASE

Human rights front and centre at Winnipeg School Division next week

Staff, students celebrate diversity, equity and human rights Sept. 15-19

As the Canadian Museum for Human Rights prepares to open its doors, the Winnipeg School Division is planning its own big kick-off, with a week of activities emphasizing the ongoing importance of human rights in their classrooms, communities and around the world.

This special week, called *Everybody has the Right*, gives students and staff at each of the Division's 77 schools a chance to celebrate their year-round exploration of human rights and how to make the world a better place, while welcoming the new museum to Winnipeg.

"*Everybody has the Right* illustrates the continuous and admirable efforts of the staff and students in our Division to put human rights on the forefront and integrate it into education for all ages. The Board of Trustees is pleased to join in celebrating all of our rights during this exciting week," said Winnipeg School Division Board Chair Suzanne Hrynyk.

The Division will kick off the week with an official opening event featuring stories from students involved in human rights initiatives, student dance and musical performances with human rights themes, and a guest performance by local musician Rachel Ashley, who will share her inspiring anti-bullying message.

Guests at the kickoff will also view the new human rights video highlighting human rights and diversity in the Division. Visit www.winnipegssd.ca/everybodyhastheright to watch the video and find more information about the week.

Media are invited to attend this event.

Kickoff date: Monday, September 15 at 10 a.m.

Location: St. John's High School, 401 Church Avenue, Winnipeg

Other activities and initiatives across our schools from September 15 to 19 will include:

- **The *Everybody has the Right* Mosaic Mural, an exciting collaborative project.** Students from every school across the Division will gather throughout the week to design mixed-media canvas tiles that will be put together to create a huge, single inspiring and thought-provoking art piece with a human rights focus. ***Media are invited to attend sessions.***
- **A special *Everybody has the Right* section** in the September issue of *Our Schools*, the Winnipeg School Division's newspaper for students, staff and the community

- **Assemblies and activities at individual schools**, including “Diversity and Equity Walls” where students can share their thoughts about human rights through words or images, and other student activities as chosen by each school or class.

“We are pleased to join in the celebration for the opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights here in Winnipeg,” said Chief Superintendent Pauline Clarke. “The Winnipeg School Division’s student population is very diverse, and we celebrate this diversity and the importance of treating each other equally and respectfully all year long. This week gives us the opportunity to highlight our students’ ongoing work and dedication to human rights issues.”

Many students in the Division’s schools spend time bringing attention to human rights causes and giving back to the community both locally and globally, said Rob Riel, Director of Aboriginal Education, who also oversees human rights education.

“Our students are already very involved in learning about human rights, and so many of our schools have groups devoted to human rights issues. Their commitment to celebrating diversity, standing up to bullying, or doing fundraising or food drives is really incredible. Even our very youngest students get involved,” Riel said.

As host of the Division’s kick-off event, St. John’s Principal Doug Taylor is excited about the week of celebrations and about what the Canadian Museum for Human Rights opening in Winnipeg will mean for students.

“In education, it’s important to find ways to move us forward. Talking about human rights is something we’ve been doing all along at St. John’s, but with the museum opening here it makes it even more real for our students and staff,” said Taylor.

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For more information, contact:

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MORE: Human Rights at Winnipeg School Division – By the numbers & FAQ

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Human Rights at the Winnipeg School Division – by the numbers

77 – Schools in the Winnipeg School Division

33,372 – Students in the Division

4,095 – Students in language programs (French Immersion, Hebrew Bilingual, Ukrainian Bilingual)

6,672 – Students identified as EAL (English as an Additional Language)

1999 – Year a series of workshops for all Division staff relating to existing anti-racist, anti-harassment policies and strategies to address them were put in place

9,000+ – Staff who have received training on their obligations and liabilities under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Manitoba Human Rights Legislation and the Division's policies on intolerance and discrimination since 1999

2012 – Year a new [Diversity and Equity Education Policy](#) was adopted

100% – Percentage of new staff who must attend a half-day human rights/anti-homophobia workshop

168 – Students from all Division schools who will participate in the Mosaic Mural human rights art project

8 – High schools with diversity clubs and/or gay-straight alliance groups (student-led organizations devoted to creating safe, accepting, welcoming environments for all students regardless of background, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression)

7 – Grade in which human rights education officially begins within the curriculum; many teachers discuss it in their elementary classes much earlier

Q&A

Why is the Winnipeg School Division celebrating human rights for only a week?

The Division recognizes, celebrates and teaches about human rights all year long. This special *Everybody has the Right* week allows us to shine a spotlight on everything we already do and to collaborate in doing even more. We have planned this week to mark the occasion of the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and we are excited about the additional opportunities for learning and exploring human rights that having the museum here opens up for our students and teachers.

Why did the Division choose the image of upraised hands for *Everybody has the Right*?

Hands are a symbol commonly used to represent human rights; in fact the international logo for human rights is represented by an image combination of a hand and a bird. Hands reaching upwards signifies hope and freedom, and the group of different sized hands for *Everybody has the Right* in outline only also symbolizes the vast diversity of our students.

What kind of human rights training does the Winnipeg School Division provide for staff?

All permanent and term staff attended mandatory half-day human rights/anti-homophobia workshops. More than 9,000 employees have received training on their obligations and the Division's expectations to combat intolerance and discrimination, and as new permanent or term employees are hired, they must attend a half-day human rights/anti-homophobia workshop.