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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Creative Learning Hub Opens at R.B. Russell for Hands-On Opportunities for Students

WINNIPEG, MB — April 16, 2026 — Winnipeg School Division will officially open Waabishkaa-Makwa, a new creative, project-based learning lab at R.B. Russell Vocational School. It is the only public education space of its kind in Manitoba that brings together Indigenous cultural teachings with creative learning.

Equipped with tools and technologies that support design, fabrication, textile work, and digital media, the lab is built for hands-on, project-based learning. Students and community members will design and build prototypes, explore textile and wearable design, and collaborate on projects that respond to community needs.

“This space represents an important investment in how students learn best — by doing, creating, and solving real-world problems,” said Matt Henderson, Superintendent of Schools, Winnipeg School Division. “Students will have opportunities to explore their interests, develop practical skills, and build confidence in their abilities.”

“This is about opening doors and supporting students and the community as they discover their career pathways,” said Sylvia Martin, Divisional Principal, Career Lab. “It creates opportunities for students to think like entrepreneurs and to take ideas from concept to creation.”

The name Waabishkaa-Makwa was gifted through a naming ceremony led by WSD Knowledge Keeper Elaine Mayham and reflects teachings that guide the space. In Ojibwe tradition, Makwa (the bear) is revered as a protector, healer, and teacher. The white bear represents a northern spirit that is watchful and protective. These teachings are woven into the learning environment, shaping a space where students develop skills alongside a strong sense of community and care for one another.

Waabishkaa-Makwa is part of Winnipeg School Division’s commitment to expanding real-world learning opportunities for students, and to creating environments where students can see themselves, their strengths, and their futures reflected in their learning.

For more information, visit:

www.winnipegssd.ca/rbrussell/waabishkaa-makwa-lab



WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

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Event Details:

Date: April 16, 2026

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Media should arrive before 11 a.m.

Location: R.B. Russell Vocational School, 364 Dufferin Avenue

What:

- Grand opening of Waabishkaa-Makwa Lab
- Ceremony and Bear Feast
- Remarks from Winnipeg School Division representatives

Visual Opportunities:

- Students engaging in hands-on learning
- Interior of the lab and equipment
- Student projects and creative work

Who:

- Sylvia Martin, Divisional Principal, Career Lab
- Elaine Mayham, WSD Knowledge Keeper
- Marney Stapley, Waabishkaa-Makwa Lab Coordinator

Winnipeg School Division is the largest and most diverse school division in the province of Manitoba with 32,000 students and nearly 6,000 employees at 78 schools. WSD nurtures a welcoming and inclusive culture of people committed to working together to inspire students to reach goals and achieve academic success.

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