

NEWS RELEASE

Winnipeg School Division students kick off *I Love to Read* month with Indigenous pilot Kimberly Ballantyne

February 1, 2024 (Winnipeg, MB) – Almost 200 Grade 3 students from across Winnipeg School Division (WSD) gathered today to kick off “I Love to Read” month. They were joined by Kimberly Ballantyne, the first Indigenous female to achieve her private pilot licence from her community Opaskwayak Cree Nation in Manitoba.

With the Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada as a fitting backdrop, Ballantyne read to WSD students from the book *Freddie The Flyer*, written by Danielle Metcalfe-Chenail and Fred Carmichael and illustrated by Audrea Loreen-Wulf. The picture books pays homage to aviator Freddie Carmichael, the first Indigenous commercial pilot in the Arctic.

“My favourite place to go in my community when I was younger was the library,” says Ballantyne. “For any aspiring aviator, read and study hard during ground school and you’ll be on your way to becoming a pilot.”

Like Freddie, Ballantyne is inspiring countless people on her journey. She has documented her entire private pilot license journey on her social media pages and is currently training for her commercial pilot licence with Harv’s Air Flight Training. She is currently the Community Engagement Specialist with Calm Air International LP, a company which plans to have her on the flight line for summer 2024 as one of its commercial pilots.

“Learning to read is a life-long pursuit and one we are committed to nurturing in all our learners and staff in WSD,” says Matt Henderson, Superintendent and CEO, Winnipeg School Division, who attended the event to support student reading. “Reading is a gift that the universe has given to our species. To read means to imagine different worlds. To read means understanding another person’s plight. To read means we can ask significant questions about what it means to be human.”

WSD was established in 1871 and currently has 79 schools, more than 30,000 students and over 4,500 full time employees. Its purpose is to provide a learning environment that fosters the growth of each student’s potential and provide equitable opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary for meaningful participation in a global and diverse society.

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