

NEWS RELEASE

WSD launches 150-year anniversary celebrations

October 29, 2021 (Winnipeg, MB) – Winnipeg School Division (WSD) today launched celebrations for the division’s 150-year anniversary. In 1871, after the province was formed, the new Manitoba Legislature passed a School Act which divided the province into 24 school districts, 12 Protestant and 12 Roman Catholic, each of them also being an electoral district. Winnipeg became Winnipeg Protestant School District Number 10 and then Winnipeg School Division Number 1 in 1875. The system of numbering school districts provided a chronological and geographic record of how education spread in Manitoba.

The community rented a log shanty between Henry Avenue and Maple Street (now Higgins Avenue) and on October 30, 1871, opened Winnipeg’s first public school. On that first historic day there were 20 children, out of a possible 35, who attended their new school.

“From 20 students to almost 33,000 Winnipeg School Division has grown along with the communities that make up our city,” said Betty Edel, Chair, WSD Board of Trustees. “From long tables with pencils and slates to computer stations, hand held devices and SMART boards – change has been enormous over 150 years but one thing remains a constant – the relationships built between students and teachers and school staff.”

In recognition of its 150-year milestone, WSD held a virtual ceremony with a small number of dignitaries in personal attendance at Tec Voc High School. During the event, a preview of the Anniversary Wish Project was rolled out. The compilation video, created by Tec Voc Broadcasting students, will include WSD alumni and community partners wishing Happy Anniversary to the division.

“As our school division celebrates its 150-year milestone we have reflected on the many achievements made in education. WSD stands out as the first school division in Canada to develop and implement an Indigenous Education Policy incorporating cultural and land-based teaching into our school curriculum. It was also the first school division in Manitoba to establish Nursery School in schools where young children could benefit from a structured learning environment,” said Pauline Clarke, Chief Superintendent and CEO. “Education is on a cusp of change as we become immersed in technology, and yet, as Trustee Edel noted, we continue to see the need and reward for personal connections. Students learn from each other as well as from all school staff and from being part of a school community,” said Ms. Clarke.

Students across the division have also been encouraged to take the WSD Minecraft for Education - WSD 150 School Build Challenge. The Challenge has students working with their classmates to build their classroom or school for others to explore virtually.

Keeping with the technology theme, students at École Secondaire Sisler High School took on the task of creating a digital timeline. Once completed, this can be viewed on the [WSD 150th website](#).

Other exciting activities to mark WSD’s 150-year anniversary include:

- 150 Book – a 224 page book highlighting each school, past and present, and programs in WSD. [Order your book here](#).
- Trees Project – the planting of 150 trees during the school year, with 25 already planted this fall and the remaining 125 to be planted in the spring.
- 150 with WAG – 150 high school students are partnering with Winnipeg Art Gallery Inuit Art Centre to create an Inuit story of the creator of animals.
- 150 Banner Display – Each of WSD’s 79 schools has created a banner to be hung on lamp poles in Winnipeg’s Downtown, Corydon and West End Biz neighbourhoods.
- WSD Celebrates the Re-Imagining School Libraries in 2021 and Beyond – a team of WSD librarians, teachers and administrators is developing a template for the future best-use of libraries in schools, incorporating technology, traditional reading and makerspace opportunities.

WSD’s 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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