

## NEWS RELEASE

### ***Winnipeg School Division students check-in with Mayor Bowman at Everybody has the Right Student Summit***

**Jan. 12, 2016 (Winnipeg, MB)** – About 320 Winnipeg School Division (WSD) students checked-in with the Mayor of Winnipeg today. It was a mid-year student summit responding to Mayor Brian Bowman’s challenge at the Oct. 13 kick off to ***WSD Everybody has the Right 2015***.

“Mayor Bowman’s challenge made me want to find a way to change the negative image of our city,” said St. John’s High School student, Syllas Parenteau. “I believe we all have a responsibility to help beat racism through knowledge.” Parenteau, who is Métis, feels everyone is born without racist thoughts and awareness, starting at a young age, will help prevent racism from developing.

“The Mayor’s challenge has created an opportunity for dialogue in safe classroom settings, where students are learning about and sharing their naturally receptive attitudes toward inclusiveness of all Canadians, regardless of colour, race or religion,” said Fatima Mota, WSD Superintendent of Education Services, Equity & Diversity, Inclusive Education.

Former St. John’s High School graduate, Michael Champagne, spoke at today’s summit, sharing his perspective on racism in Winnipeg. “There’s a change happening – and it’s because of what young people are doing to broaden minds and create a balance,” said Champagne. “I’m seeing what students are doing at schools around the city and it makes me proud to be a graduate of the Winnipeg School Division.” Champagne cited activism for Shoal Lake 40 and Students Against Racism Today (START) march as examples of awareness and involvement.

Elder Myra Laramee opened the summit following the Grand Entrance of the Eagle Staff. The Brock Corydon School choir and Peaceful Village Drummers entertained attendees. The major action of the summit involved group discussions led by special guests, identifying what schools were doing in their schools to rise to the mayor’s challenge.

“I want to congratulate all the students at St. John’s High School and across the Winnipeg School Division for their leadership and commitment to teaching empathy and growing understanding,” said Mayor Brian Bowman. “All of your efforts are an important part of changing the future of our city by educating the next generation to be empathetic and inclusive, and ensuring we are all heard and treated equally. You are helping us move forward as one community.”

In addition to in school and community project, WSD students are creating artwork on silk banners that will be hoisted during an event and march at the Forks to be held on May 20. About 3,000 students will walk in the march.

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