



NEWS RELEASE

Over 2,000 WSD students take a diversity walk for Everybody has the Right

May 20, 2016 (Winnipeg, MB) – Over 2,000 Winnipeg School Division (WSD) students today marked a year of learning in human rights and equity with a cultural event and symbolic diversity walk around the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. Special guests joining the students included City of Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman, WSD Board of Trustees Vice-Chair Sherri Rollins, Superintendent of Education Services Fatima Mota and University of Winnipeg Instructor Kevin Lamoureux.

“Our walk today is in a circle around the Canadian Museum of Human Rights – and that is very significant – because a circle means that nobody is higher than anybody else – we’re all equal,” said Rollins. “Today we are walking together as an entire school division to honour the wholeness of our community – and we are also recognizing and celebrating each schools’ unique contributions to making this a better place for all of us to live.”

School groups carried their silk art banners depicting the students’ voice on human rights issues as they joined the walk around CMHR. The banners were created over the past school year following a summit last October with Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman. During the summit, the Mayor issued a challenge to students and residents to educate and build our collective understanding and acceptance of diversity.

“Together we must identify the issues and outline a path to success for all citizens in our journey toward unity and behaving as one Winnipeg – a diverse and inclusive city,” Mayor Bowman said.

Rob Riel, the WSD’s Director of Aboriginal Education and Newcomer Services, said the challenge helped set the tone for a year of learning and leadership.

“Our year started with a fantastic student summit with Mayor Brian Bowman and his challenge to all students to celebrate the rich cultures of our people,” Riel said. “Students all across WSD really took that challenge to heart and came up with very thoughtful ideas and actions to help work toward ending racism in our city.”

Students met again with Mayor Bowman in January for a ‘check-in’ where they shared their ideas and sense of responsibility to prevent racism from developing.

“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, Sylas 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.

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