



May 28, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians, Students and Staff,

As part of Anti-Racism Awareness week, our educators and students took part in learning activities focused on understanding racism and helping build a diverse, inclusive, and nurturing community. At the end of this week, our Canadian society was reminded of the reality of racism in our history and present day.

Yesterday, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation in Kamloops, BC announced the discovery of remains of more than 215 children buried at the site of what was once a Residential school. As a District, we are horrified. We acknowledge this atrocity as a shameful part of our shared history. We recognize this news is devastating to Indigenous members of our community, causing pain, and a wide range of emotions. This tragedy is far reaching and is also impacting non-Indigenous members of our community.

In the media this week, you may have heard about Ethan Bear, an Indigenous National Hockey League player with the Edmonton Oilers. Ethan, who is a proud member of the Ochapowace First Nation, publicly took a stand against racism after receiving hurtful messages on social media. His action inspired many to join the social media movement #IStandWithEthan. In our school district, staff and students showed their solidarity by wearing jerseys with his name on it. As a District, we seek to listen, learn and support those who have been impacted by racism in our community.

The devastating news out of Kamloops and Ethan Bear's story are reminders that we as a District and society have more work to do.

In Canada, June is National Indigenous History month and June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day. It is a time to focus on the history, heritage and diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada. As part of our District's Truth and Reconciliation journey and Anti-Racism commitment, we encourage everyone to do your own learning and recommend families connect with your children and engage in conversations.

As Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission once said, "Education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it."

Moving forward, we are reaching out to our counsellors and District-based staff to prepare them with more tools to help support students and staff. It is everyone's responsibility to take care of each other.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gord Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Gord Stewart
Superintendent of Schools