

Inter Cultural Advisory Committee Report

We had our last meeting of the year on March 23rd:

- The Survey results on inter-cultural/human rights education activities currently taking place in the school board from our Vocational Centers were received.
- Still waiting for the results from the Youth Sector

Our second annual Aboriginal Day Celebration which was held on April 12th at Lindsay Place High School. Some of the press:

<https://www.facebook.com/kristinatellier/posts/10158648843650171>

<https://soundcloud.com/user-720566278-104977459/lbpsb-aboriginal-day-hr-april-12-2017-1-1>

<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/west-island-gazette/west-island-students-participate-in-aboriginal-day-celebration>

Pearson News: “Ours to Teach; Not To Keep” – Aboriginal Day at LBPSB

The Lester B. Pearson School Board recognized the important and complex history while celebrating the beauty, richness, and diversity of Aboriginal culture at its 2nd Aboriginal Day. This year’s theme: “Celebrating Aboriginal Culture” was marked by riveting, moving, and interactive music, dance, and storytelling.



Students and staff from LBPSB's 13 high schools welcomed special guests from the Aboriginal community at Lindsay Place High School where the day's festivities were held. The importance of recognition, respect, and reconciliation were emphasized throughout Aboriginal Day.

Distinguished guest Michael Rice inaugurated Aboriginal Day with a traditional Mohawk Thanksgiving Address. Mr. Rice then explained that this Thanksgiving Address should be seen as a way of life and less as a prayer in the traditional sense. Mr. Rice's address focused on giving thanks to the Earth and its elements, and acknowledging these elements for allowing our human gifts to shine. Following the Address, Mr. Rice shared a folk tale and recounted his personal experiences, struggles, and successes; a profound lesson on the power of storytelling and the importance of 'learning by listening.'

LBPSB students then took the stage for a music performance with Lindsay Place High School students performing Buffy Saint Marie's "Up Where We Belong" and Lakeside Academy performing 4 Non Blondes' "What's Up" with a special guest: award-winning recording artist Beatrice Deer.

Following the assembly, students participated in a Kairos Blanket Exercise, "a teaching tool to share the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada"

(<http://www.kairosblanketexercise.org/>). Guided by facilitators from the Aboriginal communities, participants took a literal and figurative walk through Canada's dark and often painful relationship with its Nations. Something that textbooks and traditional teaching simply cannot accomplish. Though the exercise emotionally difficult, its concluding Talking Circle left an uplifting tone as students candidly shared their thoughts drew connections between Aboriginal history and their personal/family stories.

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After a catered Aboriginal lunch by Chef Maluh, it was time to gather for a Pow Wow. Michel, the Pow Wow emcee kicked it off by explaining the 3 core elements of a Pow Wow: respect, respect, respect. Michel added that a Pow Wow is a sacred ritual with a key focus on having fun. Dancers demonstrated traditional and contemporary Aboriginal dances such as the Fancy Shawl Dance and the Hoop Dance, as the crowd was both mesmerized and clapping along to the beat.

We were then treated to a throat-singing demonstration along with an explanation of its history and important role in Northern communities. After hearing incredible throat-singing interpretations of river and mosquito sounds, some brave students volunteered for a throat-singing lesson and performance competition. Students saw first-hand how hard it is to stay focused on the rhythm and to drown out all other visual and auditory distractions. One student joined in a throat-singing/beat boxing mash-up: a perfect representation of the coming together of 2 cultures through art.



As the day ended, Suzanne Simatos, Spiritual Animator was presented with the sacred gift of an eagle's feather. An Elder explained the importance of passing on knowledge and gifts and that the eagle's feather symbolizes that. "It's ours to teach; not to keep," he said.

“Ours to teach; not to keep” quickly became a guiding principle for LBPSB’s Aboriginal Day: a commitment to teaching and confronting painful histories while celebrating the beauty and diversity of Aboriginal culture.