

June 21, 2018

To: All trustees

From: Ken Cameron, MSBA President and Norm Gould, MTS President

Re: National Indigenous Peoples Day 2018 - a call to all school boards for universal adoption of formal treaty and territorial recognition and acknowledgement in time for the 2018/19 school year

In Fall 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report, with 16 distinctive calls to action in matters of education, culture and languages, and education for reconciliation. These calls to action serve as guiding principles for the future of our students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. It is in the spirit of these calls to action and guiding principles that we request that all school boards extend due consideration for an important, and we feel highly significant amendment, to the observances that are included at the beginning of each school day in Manitoba.

This amendment would serve to implement formal, universal, and consistent acknowledgement and recognition for Treaty Lands and Indigenous Territories as part of the opening exercises that all schools perform at the commencement of each school day. The benefits from such an amendment would be numerous and would respond to several calls to action under the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Just as the singing of Canada's national anthem has become an ingrained practice for every school: fostering a sense of identity, citizenship and pride among students for their shared national heritage, so too, by instituting formal acknowledgement and recognition of Treaty Lands and Indigenous Territories, we are of the perspective that we can achieve something of lasting value and meaning for all staff and students. An important time and place during the school day to honour and respect the rights and dignity of our Indigenous staff and students, while also helping all students appreciate the obligations and sacred trust that are incumbent upon all Manitobans toward the Indigenous peoples, lands and territories of this province.

It is our hope that, if all school boards were to move forward to adopt this proposed amendment, every student in this province would graduate with the skill and knowledge of how to appropriately and formally recognize Treaty Lands and Indigenous Territories. While many school divisions have undertaken independent implementation of formal acknowledgement and recognition of Treaty Lands and Indigenous Territories as part of the school day, ensuring that such observance is universal and consistent across all divisions remains a compelling public education objective.

We would therefore encourage all school boards to consider implementation of this important observance in time for the return of classes during the 2018/19 school year.

In 2016/17, the Manitoba Teachers' Society undertook the important step of developing appropriate wording for formal acknowledgement and recognition of Treaty Lands and Indigenous Territories for every school division in Manitoba. These important statements have also been translated into the founding languages of Canada (English and French, as well local Indigenous dialects) as appropriate for each school community.

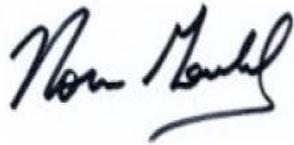
MTS has shared this wording as attached, so that every school board can determine what would be involved in their own local context. Boards are free to use this wording if they choose to do so, under granting of free license on the part of MTS.

In closing, we again wish to signal our full support for such an amendment. On this National Indigenous Peoples' Day, we recognize that time remains of the essence, to ensure that our shared leadership and initiative through the adoption of this proposed observance becomes a meaningful learning opportunity for our students, and a national model for emulation across all provinces and territories in Canada.

Sincerely,



Ken Cameron President, MSBA



Norm Gould President, MTS