

Advocate for Children and Youth Celebrates National Aboriginal Day

SASKATOON – Bob Pringle, the Advocate for Children and Youth, and his staff are celebrating National Aboriginal Day this year by participating in events with children, youth and families, and exploring how the Advocate’s office can help put recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into action.

This week, advocates are joining youth and staff at Paul Dojack Youth Centre in Regina, Kilburn Hall in Saskatoon, North Battleford Youth Centre and Drumming Hill Youth Centre in North Battleford at their National Aboriginal Day events. Advocates, along with staff and youth from the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network, are also participating in celebrations open to the public on June 22 in Saskatoon, organized by the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre.

National Aboriginal Day is celebrated across Canada every year on June 21 as a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate Aboriginal peoples and their many contributions to Canada.

“In talking with young people recently, I have been happy to see how interested they are in learning more about Aboriginal cultures, and how we can right the wrongs of the residential school system,” said Pringle. “Children today understand immediately how wrong it was to take Aboriginal children away from their families, forbid them from speaking their languages and practicing their cultures, and rarely letting them go home to be with their parents.”

“These young people are ready for more education on residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal people’s contributions to Canada, which was one of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which we will be urging government to implement.”

Earlier this week, all staff in the Advocate’s office participated in two days of training in the *Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth and Families: Reconciliation in Child Welfare*, guiding principles developed by the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada which the Advocate has adopted.

“During these days we had many opportunities to think about how we can best advocate to advance the rights, interests and well-being of First Nations and Metis children in Saskatchewan,” said Pringle. “Celebrating National Aboriginal Day is part of our own process of reconciliation.”

Staff at the Advocate’s office have also planted several heart gardens with children and youth for the First Nations Family & Community Institute’s *Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams* campaign. Heart gardens honour children lost to the residential school system and acknowledge our shared commitment to reconciliation.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. He leads a team of advocates, investigators and other staff who work on behalf of the province's young people. Our vision is that the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth are respected and valued in our communities and in government legislation, policy, programs and practice.

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