

Name: Lesley Ford

Summary of main points for the issue/ concern:

June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day. However, in the current 2022-23 calendar, it is identified as an exam day. This year, some secondary schools (not all) communicated to teachers that they should not expect students to write exams if they were away that day.

Here is an example of what was communicated.:

June 21 - National Indigenous Peoples Day

Students may or may not be absent from school on this day.

Schools are to note the following:

- Indigenous Self-Identification is a confidential process and students are not required to self-identify in order to observe the day with their families and community.
- Students may or may not indicate in advance that they will be absent on this day. Students who are absent on this day should be marked with "G" on daily attendance, with no follow-up identification required, unless voluntarily provided by the student or parent/guardian/caregiver.
- In consultation with the school's administration, teachers are to use their professional judgement regarding an alternate evaluation task(s), should it be necessary.

It is important for school staff not to make assumptions about a student's participation on this day, understanding that they may have Indigenous student(s) in their class and not be aware of it. An Indigenous student may or may not choose to observe this day; they have the right to observe the day in the way they feel honours themselves, their families and communities.

However, this puts students and families who are already hesitant to identify as being Indigenous in a stressful situation. We have forced them to either:

- have their students write the exam on the 21st and miss an important community and national celebration or
- miss their exam and risk having to self-identify in a historically (and sometimes currently) unsafe institution

Also, Secondary schools have been inconsistent in communicating these options to Indigenous students and families.

Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue:

I propose that:

- June 21st as National Indigenous Peoples Day be a protected day in the OCDSB.



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Delegation

- June 21st be a school day during which schools can participate meaningfully in celebrating this day with Indigenous communities and partners
 - June 21st should be excluded from all Secondary exam schedules going forward so that Indigenous students and families are free to be in communities to celebrate and non-Indigenous students and families can also celebrate by attending the many Summer Solstice community celebrations.
- We have opportunity here to show that we value and are listening to Indigenous students, families, partners and communities by making room to celebrate and celebrate together. This looks like Reconciliation.