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## A Message from the Aboriginal Education Department For All Coquitlam School District Parents and Students

If you have First Nations, Metis or Inuit ancestry *anywhere* in your family tree please read the following information closely.

For your information, the revised curriculum now being implemented across the province as per the Ministry of Education, includes integrated material related to Aboriginal culture, history and ways of knowing in each grade, K-12. The best summary of why this is important for all students is embedded in the First Peoples Principles of Learning:

### ***First Peoples Principles of Learning***

*Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.*

*Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).*

*Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.*

*Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.*

*Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.*

*Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.*

*Learning involves patience and time.*

*Learning requires exploration of one's identity.*

*Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.*

For more information on this topic, please access the Ministry website at:  
<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/documents.htm#curriculum>

In addition to letting you know about this important work, we are particularly interested in addressing the diverse needs of all our First Nations' students. Coquitlam School District 43 is committed to the academic success, cultural connection and socio-emotional development of all Aboriginal Learners. We have one of the highest Aboriginal graduation rates in the Province, and are very proud of the work of all our educators and the Aboriginal Education Department. We wish to continue this excellent work and improve even more, with the renewed emphasis from the revised curriculum and embedding the First People's Principles of Learning across all curricular areas. As such, self-identification is important.

### **Self-Identification**

#### **What does "self-identification" mean?**

It means that if you have *any* kind of First Nation (status or non-status), Metis or Inuit Ancestry in your family tree, no matter how far back in generations, you can "self-identify" as having ancestry. Official documentation is not required.

#### **Why self-identify yourself or your child?**

After contacting our department to self-identify your child(ren), you may access a wide variety of supports and programs during the school year such as social/emotional supports and cultural activities (see below).

Some families hesitate to self-identify due to negative past experiences or because of fears that a student may be "singled out" or made to feel uncomfortable. We are fully aware of these concerns and are sensitive to these views to support students the best way possible.

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## How Do We Self-Identify?

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Please email our office at [abedinfo@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:abedinfo@sd43.bc.ca) and provide the following information:

- Student name, birthdate and home school
  - Parent name and contact information
  - Type of Ancestry (Status, Non-status, Metis, Inuit)
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## Common Questions

### **What types of support are available?**

Aboriginal Education support may include such things as:

- Field trips
- “Rights of Passage” day camp in grades 5 & 8 for students moving on to new schools
- Cultural programs & activities in some schools
- Support from one of our staff members to “check in” with, make a connection and be available to talk or assist with personal issues
- Breakfast and lunch programs at some schools
- Aboriginal Youth Leadership Council for secondary students
- Invitation to Aboriginal Education community events
- Annual Honouring Ceremony for secondary students recognizing achievements and completion of grade 12. This ceremony is over and above school-based awards
- Post-secondary bursary opportunities

### **Will student be pulled out of classes for extra support?**

The only time a student will be taken from class for support is when this arrangement has already been made between our department, the parent and either the classroom teacher or school-based support team/Principal.

Off-site activities will always require parental-signed permission forms with full descriptions and advance notification.

### **Is there a choice to self-identify and NOT receive extra supports?**

There are cases where parents and students choose to self-identify but do not want any additional supports. Due to funding regulations, we need to provide regular contact with all students who have self-identified but the type of support can vary. The goal of our department is to work with parents and students to determine the type and amount of support and/or contact that is most comfortable and useful for each student. Other supports could include monitoring attendance and school progress, advising you of special events or simply just checking in with your child.

### **How do I find and contact the Aboriginal Education staff member assigned to student’s school?**

Your school office can provide you with this information or call our Aboriginal Education office directly at 604-945-7386.

## **Continuation of Aboriginal Education Services**

Each year we are required by the Ministry of Education to have parents of students with First Nations, Inuit or Metis ancestry self-identify to be eligible for district programs, many of which support all learners. Unless we hear otherwise from our Aboriginal parents, we will assume that your child/children will continue with our program for this school year.

## **Department Contact**

Should you have any questions or concerns throughout the school year, we encourage you to contact our office at 604-945-7386 to arrange an appointment with our District Principal, Mr. Philippe Brulot.