

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Support Team provides staff and students with an understanding and appreciation of the richness of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, interwoven with the Catholic faith. This helps to foster a sense of belonging and engage staff and students in learning through relationships and cooperative support.

One of our main goals is cultural education, in which we share a variety of information and resources pertaining to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures. The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Support Team works with Administrators and teachers, as well as community elders and stakeholders, to ensure that the presentations contain quality content that is tied to the curriculum at each grade level. The lessons are also tied to our Catholic faith, specifically the eight characteristics of Catholic Identity: spirituality, tradition, humanness, community, hospitality, justice, rationality, and sacramentality.

The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Support Team has worked in collaboration with our Division Chaplain, our Faith Permeation Lead Teacher, the Office of Indigenous Relations at the Catholic Archdiocese in Edmonton, and other community members to share the practice of smudging as a traditional form of prayer in First Nations cultures. The Catholic practice of using incense in prayer has always been an important tradition in the faith, as smudging has been in First Nations cultures. Catholics have always used earthly creations in a spiritual way, such as oil, ashes, salt, and palms, among other things. In First Nations cultures, spirituality is closely tied to the land and the blessings provided by Creator, such as sage, sweetgrass, and cedar, among other medicines. Incense is mentioned over 100 times in the Bible and in the Old Testament, God commands that “incense be offered to him everyday” (Ex 30: 1-8). The lessons on smudging reinforce the common belief that God is the Lord of all Creation, and using things of the earth is a way of honouring Him and creating an atmosphere of entering deeply into prayer and worship.

When it comes to educating staff, students and their families, and creating awareness about traditional teachings, the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Support Team welcomes any questions and would be happy to provide clarification on any of the presentations we provide.

The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Support Team can be reached at 403-343-1055.

Thank you,

Ryan Ledene - Associate Superintendent of Faith Development and Division Support

Selena Frizzley - Support Team Lead Teacher

Glenn MacLeod - Support Team Lead Teacher

Tracy Meneen - Support Team Coordinator

Pamela Taylor - Support Team Officer