

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES

Dates of Significance

Adopted under the Indigenous Education Policy and the Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy

1.0 Objective

- 1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to establish a consistent and transparent process to identify, review, select, and recognize secular and creed-based observances, dates of significance, holidays, events, and celebrations in District learning and working environments.
- 1.2 The District acknowledges:
 - 1.2.1 The education system and related structures perpetuate dominant narratives and perspectives. This includes the recognition of typical dates of significance that reflect the Gregorian (solar) calendar and national and provincial statutory holidays, which include some days of significance for some groups/communities and not others;
 - 1.2.2 The importance of recognizing days of significance in District classrooms, schools and workplaces;
 - 1.2.3 The challenges of recognizing the volume of dates that may be significant to the diverse and intersectional communities the District serves and employees, as well as the different ways in which dates may be observed within and among communities; and
 - 1.2.4 Its commitment and responsibilities to reflect, affirm and teach about diverse identities, religions, cultures and experiences throughout the year (not only on days or months of significance), and that the recognition of diverse identities happens in several different ways to support inclusive education.
- 1.3 The Indigenous Education Department will determine which dates of significance for Indigenous Peoples and communities will be recognized (and how they will be recognized), in partnership with Indigenous community partners and in accordance with the Indigenous Education Policy.
- 1.4 The recognition of dates of significance should respectfully and appropriately honour each observance or event in ways that support meaningful learning about diverse identities and experiences, and that contribute to culturally sustaining learning and working environments.
- 1.5 The District created and uses an online “dates of significance calendar” to:
 - Support inclusive design principles and practices (for example, to help plan activities and events to prevent potential conflicts with creed-based days of significance and protected days, refer to section 4.5); and
 - Raise awareness about various dates of significance throughout the year.

- 1.6 This procedure is to be interpreted and applied in accordance with the District's commitment to promoting and upholding Indigenous rights and Human Rights and the Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention policy in all of its learning and working environments.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 Key terms used in this procedure are defined in the [Human Rights Policy's Glossary of Terms](#)

Dates of significance calendar is the District's list of approved dates of significance that will be recognized in a school year, subject to the requirements of this procedure.

3.0 Procedure

Dates of Significance Working Group

- 3.1 The District will establish a Dates of Significance Working Group that will meet at least annually, in March, to identify recommended days for the next year's proposed dates of significance calendar and to review recognition requests from DDSB students, staff, families, and community members, based on the considerations and principles outlined in sections 3.5 to 3.8, and subject to Administrative Council's approval (section 3.9).
- 3.2 The Days of Significance Working Group will be comprised of representatives from:
- Anti-Oppression Department
 - Central Staff Facilitator
 - Communication Department
 - Indigenous Education
 - Leadership Department
 - Parent/Guardian/Community Member
 - Senior Student
 - School Administration (elementary and secondary)
 - Teaching and Learning Department

Recognition Requests

- 3.3 DDSB students, families, staff and community members who wish to add or make changes to the District's dates of significance calendar shall submit dates for review/consideration through an online form. All requests must align with the DDSB commitments and responsibilities under section 1.6 and the requirements of this procedure. The Days of Significance Working Group will review all requests annually in March. The proposed dates of significance calendar will be adjusted to reflect dates that the working group recommends including in the calendar. Where a requested change is not supported based on the requirements of this procedure, the Days of Significance Working Group will share the request and the rationale with Administrative Council for a decision.

Other Changes

- 3.4 The Days of Significance Working Group may also recommend adding, reviewing, changing, or removing dates from the calendar at any time based on ministry direction and/or changing circumstances (for example, legal, social, geopolitical, political or other circumstances), where the Days of Significance Working Group determines that the change is necessary to align with the requirements of this procedure.

Considerations and Guiding Principles

- 3.5 The Days of Significance Working Group will consider the following guiding principles when determining which dates of significance will be recognized and added to the calendar:
- Dates recognized in educational services provincially, nationally and internationally (for example, dates observed by the United Nations), and the relevance and connection to the curriculum and to District students, families, staff and community members;
 - Ministry of Education curriculum requirements, Policy/Program Memoranda, strategies and direction (for example, days that focus on education and provide opportunities for learning or educational activities about diverse identities and cultures, histories and traditions and where the significance of the day can be integrated into the existing curriculum to enrich students' learning experiences), and in keeping with the responsibilities and requirements of a public school board;
 - Rights, responsibilities and principles of the DDSB's Indigenous Education Policy, Human Rights Policy and Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy and related procedures including and not limited to:
 - Upholding the distinct rights of Indigenous Peoples and the District's commitment to reconciliation;
 - Upholding human rights and anti-oppression principles and duty bearer responsibilities;
 - Promoting understanding, empathy and respect to help address historical and ongoing disadvantage and discrimination against communities and groups;
 - Uplifting and amplifying diverse and intersecting identities and experiences within and among groups;
 - Challenging discriminatory stereotypes, assumptions and prejudice;
 - Fostering inclusion, well-being and belonging with sensitivity to diverse experiences;
 - Focusing on local school communities while also recognizing diverse communities within Durham Region, Ontario and Canada; and
 - Using demographic representation as a guide while not reinforcing dominant identities and experiences, and making space for underrepresented communities; and
 - Input and feedback from DDSB community members, and with attention to differences within and among communities in how dates are recognized/observed.
- 3.6 When identifying potential dates of significance, the Days of Significance Working Group will also carefully consider:
- Potential bias in recognizing some identities and experiences over others;
 - Operational feasibility based on the volume of dates (for example, the District cannot recognize all dates of significance observed by the United Nations); and
 - That some dates may negatively or adversely impact students, families, staff and community members, where recognizing a date of significance for one community may, for example:
 - Not align with the District's commitments and responsibilities to uphold dignity and respect for all community members or to provide learning and working environments free from discrimination; and

- Diminish, devalue or delegitimize another group's identities or experiences or cause discriminatory harm (for example, where there may be different interpretations or understandings of historical or ongoing geopolitical events or conflicts).
- 3.7 The District acknowledges that learning about other peoples' experiences and identities (including where those identities may conflict with a person's beliefs or opinions, or may cause discomfort) in age-appropriate ways is not discriminatory. However, erasing, devaluing, or diminishing identities that are protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code may be found to be discriminatory.
- 3.8 Although the District may not recognize all days of significance for all community members through the dates of significance calendar, this in no way diminishes the District's commitment to supporting:
- Learning about diverse identities and experiences; and
 - Safety, well-being and sense of belonging for all students, families, staff and community members.

Approval

- 3.9 The Days of Significance Working Group will submit its recommendations for the proposed days of significance calendar to Administrative Council for review and approval. Administrative Council will consider the principles and requirements of this procedure when making its decisions.
- If not approved, Administrative Council will provide the Days of Significance Working Group with the rationale. The Days of Significance Working Group will make appropriate adjustments to the days of significance calendar, based on Administrative Council's feedback and direction.
 - Where a requested change made by a community member is not supported based on the requirements of this procedure, the Days of Significance Working Group/District? will provide the requestor with the rationale.
- 3.10 Once the days of significance calendar is approved:
- Approved dates may be recognized as outlined in this procedure; and
 - Subject to section 3.4, no other changes to the calendar will be made within the school year.

4.0 Responsibilities and Implementation

Communication

- 4.1 The Communications Department and the Anti-Oppression Department will establish a consistent process to communicate days of significance to schools, staff, families, and community members.

Recognition

- 4.2 District staff recognizes diverse identities and experiences throughout the year (not only on days or months of significance).
- 4.3 Educators are required to provide appropriate learning opportunities and integrate content that enhances understanding and respect for multiple and intersecting identities by:
- Fostering inclusive and welcoming environments

- Embedding teaching and learning about diverse identities and experiences into their practices and when implementing the curriculum, in age-appropriate ways and without appropriation
- Providing appropriate context and background information about the significance of the day, and creating respectful spaces for conversations in a way that emphasizes learning, critical thinking, understanding and empathy
- Handling sensitive discussions and recognizing different perspectives with a focus on dignity and respect for everyone.

4.4 The District will provide educators with professional development and resources to guide classroom practices.

Protected days

- 4.5 To support inclusive design and minimize the need for individual creed-based accommodations, schools will make every effort to not schedule exams, field trips, graduations, community engagement events and other significant school activities or staff professional development on days for which they anticipate that students and staff may need to be away from school or work to observe a date of Indigenous, religious or spiritual significance. School staff will refer to the [Accommodating Creed in Schools: An Inclusive Design Approach](#) Guide and the Protected Days calendar for further guidance and considerations to support inclusive design and planning.
- 4.6 Students who require accommodation to observe a day of religious or spiritual significance may refer to the [Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure](#) and the [Accommodating Creed in Schools: An Inclusive Design Approach](#) Guide and contact their teacher or school administrator.
- 4.7 Staff who require accommodation to observe a day of religious or spiritual significance may refer to the [Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure](#) and their Collective Agreement or Terms and Conditions (as applicable) and contact People and Culture.

5.0 Reference Documents

5.1 Other Documents

- [Indigenous Education Policy](#)
- [Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy](#)
- [Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Procedure](#)
- [Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure](#)
- [Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy](#)
- [Flags Procedure](#)
- [Accommodating Creed in Schools: An Inclusive Design Approach](#) Guide
- [Dates of Significance Guide](#)

6.0 [Considerations for School Based Events & Days of Recognition](#)

Effective Date

2024-05-28