



NIAGARA CATHOLIC

LARRY HUIBERS
CHAIR OF THE BOARD

CAMILLO CIPRIANO
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

CONTACT

ISSUED BY:
JENNIFER PELLEGRINI
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Office: 905-735-0240 ext. 297
Mobile: 905-651-3818
Email: jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com

ABOUT US

NIAGARA CATHOLIC SERVES MORE THAN 20,000 STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGHOUT NIAGARA.

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MEDIA RELEASE

May 26, 2021

The Niagara Catholic District School Board respects the uniqueness of our students and staff, and recognizes everyone as a child of God, perfectly made, just as we are. We believe that we all have an inherent right to dignity and confidence in the knowledge that we are welcomed and accepted, yet we know that there are students and staff in our schools and sites who struggle to find a place where they belong.

On June 1, Niagara Catholic will make a public statement to our students and staff, particularly those students and staff who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, to ensure they know that they belong within Niagara Catholic. During the May 25 Board Meeting, trustees voted to fly the Pride flag at Niagara Catholic secondary schools, continuing education schools and the Catholic Education Centre from June 1-6, Pride Week in Niagara. The historic decision is a visible sign of support for our 2SLGBTQ+ students, staff and their allies.

Trustees will hold public consultations with stakeholders about future Pride Week/Month recognitions later this year.

“I am so grateful to my fellow trustees in recognizing the urgency of acknowledging Pride week,” said Trustee Turner. “Jesus the Good Shepherd loves and cares for all members of His flock. However, He recognizes the marginalized, and when members need extra care. For those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, that is Pride Week and month. Flying the Pride flag is a clear and powerful symbol to the friends, family members and allies of our 2SLGBTQ+ students and staff that our schools are safe places where all are welcome.”

Chair of the Board Larry Huibers also expressed his support for the motion.

“Niagara Catholic has many students, staff and their families who identify as 2SLGBTQ+,” said Chair Huibers. “It is not enough to simply tell students and staff who identify as gay, transgender and non-binary that they are loved and supported. Flying the Pride flag is the most universally accepted, visible show of support for all who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, and I am extremely proud of the Board of Trustees for supporting the motion to fly the Pride flag during Pride Week in June.”

Niagara Catholic’s Mental Health Lead said the decision to raise the Pride flag at Niagara Catholic secondary and continuing education schools and the Catholic Education Centre shows the Board’s commitment to student wellness.

“The reality of discrimination and oppression creates and reinforces barriers to equitable mental health outcomes,” said Andrea Bozza. “Equity and student mental health are deeply connected, and as a Catholic school board, we play an important role to promote equity, inclusion and safety for all students and staff. Acknowledging

and accepting our students and staff who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ allows them to live authentically, which supports better outcomes for our students. I am very pleased that the Board of Trustees has recognized the importance of the Pride flag in creating safer, more inclusive spaces.”

Director of Education Camillo Cipriano noted that flying the Pride flag should be seen for what it is – a show of loving solidarity and support for our students, staff and family members who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

“Niagara Catholic has a duty of care to all those who enter our schools and sites, whether it is students, staff, family members or those from outside of our community,” said Director Cipriano. “The Catholic social teachings speak to values such as inclusion, compassion, respect, fairness, equity and social justice. As Catholics, and as educators, we must ensure that everyone who walks through our doors knows that they are safe, valued and respected. This is our call to service and mandate as Catholics. I want all of our students and staff to know that God created you, God loves you and God is on your side.”