

NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



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We are a
CHRIST-CENTERED
CATHOLIC FAITH community
that celebrates diversity
and fosters SPIRITUAL GROWTH,
inspiring ALL to REACH
their FULL potential in
MIND, BODY, & SPIRIT

ENCOUNTERING SOULS
AND OPENING MINDS
SO that all students
SUCCEED

NIAGARA CATHOLIC ANNOUNCES NEW INDIGENOUS LEAD

AUGUST 28, 2023

The Niagara Catholic District School Board is pleased to announce that Gary Parker has been selected as the Board's new Indigenous Lead.

Parker joined Niagara Catholic in August and has already begun planning for the 2023-2024 school year.

"I am very happy to join the Niagara Catholic District School Board as Indigenous Lead," said Parker. "My previous work as a front-line worker for community based Indigenous organizations, as well as my formal education in Indigenous studies, will support me in my new role. I have developed many Indigenous youth initiatives throughout the Niagara region, and I have also developed and facilitated numerous cultural competency trainings throughout Ontario and on the national level. These skills will help me transition into this position with ease.

A member of the Onödowá'ga:' (Seneca) Nation from Ta:nöwöde' (Tonawanda) Seneca Territory, part of the Six Nations Confederacy, also known as the Haudenosaunee People (People of the Longhouse), Parker said the teachings he learned growing up guide him in his everyday life and will lead him in his new role.

"We, the People of the Longhouse fall under what we call the *Great Law of Peace*," said Parker. I am very thankful to have had these teachings as my foundation, as they are very important in being an Indigenous person. I use these teachings in my everyday life as well as incorporate them into my daily work philosophies. I carry a lot of teachings having grown with this way of life as well as traveling extensively to powwows in communities throughout Turtle Island. I pay respect and thank all my teachers and elders who have brought me to where I am today.

"I look forward to working with our Indigenous students and supporting them as they journey through their educational pathways; to supporting and empowering them so they achieve the goals they set out for. I also look forward to sharing Indigenous culture with non-Indigenous students and staff as part of our path away from colonization and towards reconciliation." Director of Education Camillo Cipriano called Parker a "welcome addition" to the Niagara Catholic leadership team.

"We are incredibly fortunate to have someone with Gary's wide range of education and experience at Niagara Catholic," he said. "Gary is very well respected in the Indigenous community, not only in Niagara but throughout the province and across Canada. His commitment to the success of Indigenous students in our schools, and his positive, forthright nature and desire to move Niagara Catholic forward in our relationship with the Indigenous community impressed our senior leadership team. He is truly a welcome addition to our leadership team."