



Holy Spirit Catholic School Division

# PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, October 29, 2020

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## Catholic Central High School Honoured with Blackfoot Name - *Taatsikioyis*

On Wednesday, October 28, 2020, a small group met in the Catholic Central High School Theatre to partake in a smudge, face painting, and special naming ceremony for the entire school by Kainai Elder, Tom Little Bear (*Kaataomaahka* - No Runner)

Mr. Little Bear began by speaking about the cultural significance of the number “four,” and how appropriate it is that Catholic Central High School should be the fourth institution in the City of Lethbridge to receive a name.

He went on to talk about his youth, explaining how fortunate he was to have a strong traditional Blackfoot upbringing, where his grandparents were leaders in the sacred community. Alongside his education at home, he experienced an education rooted in the Catholic faith having been a student of Ecole St. Mary, St. Francis Junior High School, and Catholic Central High School. Models of prayer were everywhere for him - in the morning seeing his grandmother greet Creator and creation, in the evening when his grandfather conducted smudges, and through the kindness and guidance of his teachers at school, some of whom were Sisters of the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ).

Woven into the story of his youth, Elder Little Bear spoke about the annual Sundance held on the Kainai reserve. This significant cultural event brings the Kainai people together to refresh themselves and reinforce their spiritual and traditional ties to the land, the Creator, and each other. He explained that, though many tipis gather at Sundance, it is always centre tipi that is considered to be the most sacred.

And, from this tale, he bestowed Catholic Central High School with its new name:

***Taatsikioyis* - “Centre Tipi”**

The sacred centre of one of the most important events in the Kainai tradition.

Those present were visibly moved.

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*All God's  
Children*

*Excellence in  
Learning*

*Sacramentality*

*Our Collaborative  
Community*

*Ministry*

*Stewardship*

Principal Joanne Polec remarked that, when she heard the name, “It truly felt like we were on holy ground, a most sacred space. Words cannot express how blessed I feel to have had the opportunity to be present in this moment of reconciliation today. Together with the administrative team, with the continued leadership of our Division First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Principal, Annette Bruised Head, and with the guidance and collaborative support from our elders and First Nations Workers, I have no doubt that we will endeavor to live up to the name we have been given.”

“I felt so privileged to have been a part of this powerful and beautifully moving ceremony; listening to Elder Tom Little Bear’s wisdom about the interconnectedness of our faith and the cultural beliefs and ways of being of our Blackfoot people,” said Superintendent Ken Sampson. “As a Catholic school division, we continue to be truly blessed by the presence and leadership of the First Nations people of our communities.”

“Many of our Blackfoot Community know the significance of the name and the honor to have received it is incredible,” expressed Annette Bruised Head, Division Principal of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education. “In my experience of the *Taatsikioyis*, it is a place of sacredness, learning and relationship. It is where the Blackfoot gather each summer to renew our relationship with all creation and Creator. Now our school is the place where the spirit of that sacred renewal is lived out. Our Blackfoot students can be connected even further and come to fully realize the significance of learning and prayer, in the way that their parents, grandparents, and relatives who have attended our Holy Spirit Catholic Schools; and to fulfill the wishes of those that went before them...get an education, pray, and have courage.”

Catholic Central High School’s new Blackfoot name will be prominently displayed in the school’s front foyer, reminding all who enter that they are in a sacred place.

The [livestream of the ceremony](#) can be accessed on the Catholic Central High School Facebook Page. For more information, please contact:

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