

October 2, 2015

PRAIRIE VALLEY SCHOOL DIVISION SUPPORTS GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

Today, all 1,300 Prairie Valley School Division personnel, including board members, senior leadership, principals, vice-principals and staff, are attending a presentation on supporting gender and sexual diversity in schools by guest speaker Dr. Kristopher Wells, an assistant professor and director for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta. The presentation is at 10:00 AM at Evraz Place, Queensbury Convention Centre as part of Prairie Valley School Division's annual professional development institute.

"Prairie Valley Board of Education hosts annual student senates to engage youth in meaningful discussions around policies and practices, and last year, our students challenged the division to provide a more inclusive environment," said Janet Kotylak, Chair of the Prairie Valley Board of Education. "We are an accepting and inclusive school division, and we are proud of our students for helping us to recognize that we can do more to welcome and accommodate all students and staff," said Janet.

"We must remain current regarding the needs of our students and staff," said Prairie Valley Director and CEO, Ben Grebinski. "To do that, we must expand upon what we are already doing and explore further opportunities to welcome and accommodate the differences in all students and staff. This includes raising awareness about gender and sexual diversity."

Prairie Valley School Division has developed a draft policy to address diversity. The division is consulting this month with students, staff and parents on the draft policy for implementation in the 2015-2016 school year. The division will be working with schools to help them put the policy into practice and further support diversity in schools and the workplace.

Dr. Kristopher Wells is an assistant professor and Director of Programs & Services, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta. He is the co-founder of Camp fYrefly, Canada's only national leadership retreat for sexual and gender minority youth. Dr. Wells is the author of the Alberta government's new homophobic and transphobic bullying and gay-straight alliance resources.

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