

Black Shirt Day and Black Excellence Day

Just this week the provincial government proclaimed [January 14th as Black Excellence Day](#), a day to recognize and celebrate Black history, to learn about Black stories, Black art and Black people, and to stand in solidarity with Black Canadians.

Last year, on January 15 2021, the Anti-Racism Coalition (ARC) Vancouver, initiated the [inaugural Black Shirt Day](#) which helped to inspire Black Excellence Day.

Following last year's event, the Ninandotoo Anti-Racism Society – a Vancouver-based charitable organization named after the Swahili word "nina ndoto" meaning "I have a dream" – consulted with members of various Jewish and human rights community groups who voiced concerns over the words "black shirt" in relation to traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors. In response, the society established Black Excellence Day to be inclusive while continuing to acknowledge the ongoing civil rights struggle of Black and racialized Canadians.

Both movements take place Jan. 15, coinciding with the birthday of American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. However, if Jan. 15 falls on a weekend, as it does this year, Black Excellence Day is celebrated on the preceding Friday. On this day many will wear black to show solidarity.

The Pacific Rim School District wishes to acknowledge these events. Individual schools and classes may engage in learning activities and demonstrations around these themes. Given the relatively short timeline, as a district, we have chosen to highlight the topic of racism throughout the month, as evidenced in themes highlighted in our [Indigenous Education Team's monthly newsletter](#) and as the central theme of our professional learning activities on the January 28th Curriculum Implementation Day. It is important that we continue to find opportunities to promote inclusivity, acceptance and equity in our schools and communities not simply as singular events but as an ongoing commitment to growth and learning.

