



News Release

Sod turning ceremony celebrates the future of Blackfalds' St. Veronica Catholic School

For immediate release – October 23, 2024

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools (RDCRS) celebrated a significant milestone last week with the sod turning ceremony for St. Veronica Catholic School, marking the ceremonial beginning of construction for the new school in Blackfalds. The event on October 17 was filled with excitement and reverence as various members of the community gathered to celebrate the future of education in the region.

The ceremony began with greetings from Ryan Ledene, Associate Superintendent of System Services, followed by a heartfelt rendition of O'Canada performed by students from St. Gregory the Great Catholic School. RDCRS Vice-Chair Anne Marie Watson led the opening prayer, setting a tone of gratitude and hope for the new school. Jonathan Mauro, Indigenous Education Services Coordinator, then provided an acknowledgement of the land, which was followed by a teaching on the importance of the land by Elder Darryl Lickers.

Father Liju Jose from Lacombe's St. Stephen Parish then led a beautiful liturgy, blessing the grounds of the new school.

Dignitaries, including Innisfail-Sylvan Lake MLA Devin Dreeshen (who brought greetings on behalf of Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis), Lacombe-Ponoka MLA Jennifer Johnson, Blackfalds Mayor Jamie Hoover, RDCRS Board Chair Murray Hollman, and Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Finnigan delivered greetings, emphasizing the importance of St. Veronica Catholic School as a place where students will be nurtured both academically and spiritually.

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The highlight of the ceremony was the official groundbreaking, where RDCRS trustees, community leaders, dignitaries, and future students symbolically dug into the earth to signify the start of construction.

Trustee Cynthia Leyson concluded the event with a closing prayer, asking for blessings over the construction process and the future students and staff of the school.

Following the ceremony, guests were invited to a reception at the Eagle Builders Centre, where community members continued to celebrate this exciting new chapter for Blackfalds.

“This sod turning ceremony is a reflection of the excitement and growth in Blackfalds. St. Veronica Catholic School will be a vibrant addition to our division, serving the needs of our students and the community,” said Ryan Ledene, reflecting on the momentous day.

“The Board is deeply honoured to be part of this project. St. Veronica’s values of compassion and kindness align with our vision for Catholic education. We look forward to the many students who will walk through these doors and the bright futures they will build,” said Murray Hollman.

“St. Veronica Catholic School will be a place where faith, learning, and community come together. Today’s ceremony is just the beginning of a journey that will inspire generations to come,” said Superintendent Finnigan, sharing her excitement about the school’s future.

St. Veronica Catholic School will accommodate approximately 500 students. The school is designed to meet LEED Silver certification, ensuring an environmentally sustainable future for the next generation of learners.

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools serves over 9,600 students in 21 schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, and Olds. It also supports the learning of over 950 students in a Home Education Program. The Division is committed to serving children and parents with a complete offering of learning opportunities delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and within the means of the Division.

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