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COMMUNIQUÉ

NATIONAL RIBBON SKIRT DAY - JANUARY 4, 2023

January 4th is National Ribbon Skirt Day as it has received Royal Assent and is now a federal act (Bill S-219) – a bill put forward by Manitoba Senator Mary Jane McCallum. Every January 4th, National Ribbon Skirt Day “will provide an opportunity for everyone in Canada to recognize, learn about, and celebrate the importance of Indigenous traditions and expressions of culture” (federal government release). The Senate bill describes the skirt as a “centuries-old spiritual symbol of womanhood, identity, adaptation and survival and ... a way for women to honour themselves and their culture.” The brightly patterned handmade skirts adorned with ribbons are traditionally worn during special events and in ceremonies by First Nations women or gender-diverse people as an expression of cultural pride, identity, strength and history. The Ribbon Skirts have also been worn at marches nationwide in honour of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

The inspiration behind this bill honours Isabella Kulak, now an 11-year-old Ojibway girl from Cote First Nation in Saskatchewan. Isabella, an Indigenous youth, was shamed by an educator at her school for wearing a traditional Indigenous ribbon skirt during a “formal day” before Christmas break in 2021. The fifth-grade student was shamed and was told by the teacher’s assistant that her skirt was not appropriate for the event as her outfit did not match and was not considered formal. The staffer expressed that she should have worn store-bought clothing like the other students.

Senator Mary Jane McCallum describes the bill’s passing as “momentous” (Winnipeg Sun, Dec. 27, 2022), and Chief George Cote of the Cote First Nation called this a “historic day” and commended young Isabella Kulak for her courage and is proud of her. McCallum stated that everyone is encouraged to proudly wear regalia that “represents the power of their respective cultures and heritages.”

On CBC Radio One's *Afternoon Edition*, Isabella said she'd be wearing her ribbon skirt proudly on Jan. 4th.



Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services translates into “All of us, we are one,” and is driven by our commitment to delivering positive support to children and families through client-focused service delivery processes. KGCFS is committed to fostering strong families through its delivery by inclusion of First Nations cultural practices. KGCFS has three office locations (Wiikwemkoong, M’Chigeeng and Sudbury, ON) to service seven member First Nations and other families identifying as First Nation within the Districts of Sudbury/Manitoulin. Please visit us at www.kgcfs.org

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