

Gaa-izhi-gikendamaan noongom

What I've learned today—First Nation, Métis and Inuit education highlights for fall 2018



Fall 2018

GAA-IZHI-IZHITWAAWAAD ANISHINAABEG CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

On October 2-4, the Rainy River District School Board, in conjunction with Seven Generations Education Institute, The Robertson Program for Inquiry-based Teaching in Mathematics and Science, Natural Curiosity, Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, hosted a conference at La Place Rendez-Vous.

Entitled “Gaa-izhi-izhitwaawaad anishinaabeg: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning,” the three-day conference highlighted the partnerships of these groups who have been working together with a focus on Indigenous educational leadership and innovative ways to teach and learn mathematics since 2013.

The conference coincided with Dagwaaginimaawindoosijgewin (Fall Harvest) and gave the over 100 participants—educators, policy makers and academics from across the country—an opportunity to experience the collaborative work that is being done in Treaty #3 in Northwestern Ontario.



On Day 1, participants attended Fall Harvest, visited an outdoor camp with the Kindergarten class at Mine Centre School and enjoyed a fish fry hosted by Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation. On Day 2, participants attended Fall Harvest at Seven Generations Education Institute and take part in one of four workshops. Later that evening, a public lecture on Reconciliation in Schools was presented by Kevin Lamoureux, Associate Vice-President of Indigenous Affairs at the University of Winnipeg.. Day 3 began with keynote speaker Lisa Lunney Borden (St. Francis Xavier University) presenting “Inspired by the Elders: Doing Math Differently.” A panel discussion was then hosted on the Language Strategy: “Anishinaabemodaa—Let’s Speak Ojibwe,” followed by two more workshop sessions and a keynote address by Maurice Switzer (Ontario Humans Rights Commission).

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ORANGE SHIRT DAY

For the month of September, Christa Gibson and Jason Jones visited classes across the District delivering lessons and activities in recognition of Orange Shirt Day. The focus of the lessons was to develop student understanding of residential schools and the impact they had on children, their families, and their communities.

In several classes, students made orange attachment hearts to recognize the loss of attachment felt by those impacted by residential schools. Students reflected upon the attachments they have in their own lives, and represented those in the making of the hearts.

Other classes worked on a collaborative project to design feather wreaths as symbols of remembrance. Students from various classes at Riverview, McCrosson-Tovell, FFHS, Robert Moore, Mine Centre, and North Star Community School designed individual feathers to remember the approximate 130 residential schools that formerly existed across Canada. The students' designs were blended together to create wreaths in memory of the residential school legacy.

Though the official date was Sunday, September 30th, the Rainy River District School Board commemorated the Orange Shirt Day on October 1st.



ART PROJECT HELPS STUDENTS CONNECT TO LANGUAGE

As part of TakingITGlobal's Connected North program, Rainy River District School Board students learned about Ojibwe language and culture through art. The program partnered with Indigenous Artist and Visual Story Teller, Nyle Johnston at Miigizi Creations, to develop an Ojibwe Language and Education Resource Kit called "Connecting with our First Family."

The purpose of the project was to support students and educators in the process of understanding and appreciating the Anishinaabe Nation and strengthening identity, culture, Ojibwe language revitalization and community development. The collection of images, featuring different line drawings of animals, birds and insects, were transformed into a series of educational resources, games and learning activities for classrooms and youth groups. The resources include a deck of cards featuring 40 images and a series of learning activities for educators to use in classes of different grades; a colouring book with animal descriptions prepared by Jason Jones, Ojibwe Language Coordinator at the Rainy River District School Board; games like animal Bingo; a 12-month calendar; and more.



The project was inspired by Mr. Jones, along with elders from Treat 3 Territory, who have been passing on traditional knowledge about animals and our relationship to the land to the next generation.

"It is only when we understand our relationship to the animals, birds, fish, insects and other creatures, that we can truly know ourselves and experience the beauty of our interconnectedness," said Mr. Jones.

The art project was featured as a Community Gallery exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario through September 30, 2018.

DAGWAAGINIMAAWINDOOSIJIGEWIN (FALL HARVEST)

Each year, all Grade 5 students and students from the Grade 10 Civics class from the Rainy River District School Board have the opportunity to take part in Fall Harvest, an annual event hosted by Seven Generations Education Institute. This year, students attended on Oct. 3-4. Elders and knowledge keepers from the surrounding First Nations, gathered together to deliver a program that is representative of the preparations taken for sustaining health and well-being for the winter months. Students participated in or observed activities that have long since sustained the Anishinaabeg land and wildlife in this area for thousands of years.



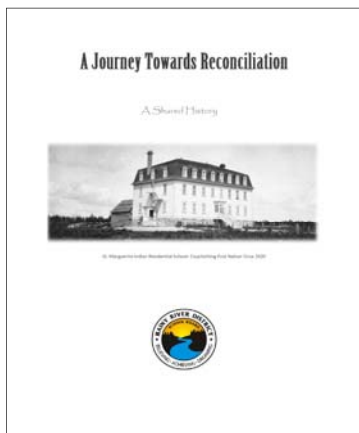
Manoomin (wild rice) was harvested and dried in preparation for Dagwaaginimaawindoosijigewin and students had the opportunity to participate in parching, dancing on (for the boys), winnowing and cleaning or finishing the manoomin. Participants sampled popped rice, locally harvested tea and fried bannock. Students observed fish, geese, and deer being cleaned and prepared for cooking or smoking. They learned about building a smokehouse and smoking meat that will last through the cold winter when game can be scarce. Students observed the process of rendering bear fat to make bear grease, which has many medicinal and healing purposes. Students relaxed in the teepee for storytelling and heard valuable teachings promoting physical and mental health. Elders, who were in the Indian Residential School System, also shared powerful stories and teachings on resiliency. There was also Métis jigging and cooking bannock on a stick.

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JOURNEY TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

The “Journey Towards Reconciliation” resource was used in Grade 8 classrooms across the Board last year, with great success. The resource came to fruition as a result of the efforts put forth by our Indigenous Education team and Grade 8 teachers across the District.



The team met four times

throughout the year. At the first meeting, the history of Residential Schools was provided to teachers with a variety of resources to support their programming efforts. The second and third meetings were devoted to collaborating and creating the contents/lesson plans themselves.

The final meeting or work session included working on the layout, design and logistics of the resource, preparing it for print and distribution.

Every Grade 8 teacher across the District has a hardcopy of the resource and the online link is now available on the Board Website on the Staff portal page.



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The role of the Indigenous Education Coordinator is to support and increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of First Nation, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and perspectives for all staff and students. We are committed to

improving the well-being and achievement of First Nation and Métis students in our schools while embedding culture in our classrooms, and supporting teachers to implement curriculum developed in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOMS

Making looms and wampum belts in Junior/Intermediate classes. →

Using a bead timeline to understand Treaties and the history of Indigenous people. ↓



RRDSB INDIGENOUS EDUCATION WEBSITE

For more information on Rainy River District School Board Indigenous Education Initiatives, please visit our website at: <https://www.rrdsb.com/indigenous-education>

CONTACT US

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