

JOURNEY OF TRUTH AND

RECONCILIATION

IN



September 2019

“ *The eyes of the world and the gaze of history is upon us.
What we do now and in the years ahead matters a great deal.* ”

~ Justice Murray Sinclair ~





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THE JOURNEY OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION IN EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

“ Board Chair Harris, Board of Trustees, Superintendent Joan Carr, when we talk about Truth and Reconciliation, I’m not going to talk very long, but I want to just give you a little bit of historic information when we talk about highlights within Edmonton Catholic School District. Edmonton Catholic School District has honoured my people for many years and to date, I could say 37 years. When we started at St. Pius School back in the eighties and then being given St. Clare School in 1986-87; when we as parents came to this boardroom to ask if we could please have our own school where we could teach our language, our culture, but also to have the most-high academics of what our children needed. So that has always been and to let you know I’ve been around 33 years of those 37. And I continue to be a voice for our Indigenous communities.

Long before the Government brought out the Truth and Reconciliation, long before we had the recommendations, the Calls to Action. We’ve already done that and I’m very proud to have been part of that. And to be given a policy that states we as a Council of Elders are the Indigenous voice for Edmonton Catholic; it can’t be any more powerful than that. And I know we are the first of its kind in Canada, let alone Alberta. So, I’m very proud to say that and that we continue to work together. ”

~ Elder Betty Letendre ~

addressing the Edmonton Catholic Schools’ Board of Trustees, January 23/18

The Elders tell us that the longest journey is from the head to the heart. Historically, the programs of Edmonton Catholic Schools (ECSD) have been grounded in showing respect, kindness and heart to the Indigenous peoples of Edmonton. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action did not mark the beginning of ECSD support for Indigenous peoples. We have a long history of working towards building stronger relationships in our community rooted in sharing the truth of Canada’s historical treatment of Indigenous peoples. Foundations such as the Council of Elders, Indigenous Learning Services and the Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin Cree Language and Culture Programs were well established long before the Division’s participation in the formal work of the TRC in March 2014. Since that time, each of our schools and departments have participated in activities designed to create an emotional connection between the truth of Canada’s history and the desire to foster reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and

sisters and build stronger and healthier communities; in other words, taking action to connect the head (what we know) with the heart (what we feel).

Edmonton Catholic Schools success in meeting the needs of Indigenous students is undeniable. School programming has grown from a program in one school to an elementary/junior high school offering Indigenous programming at Ben Calf Robe School, then to five Division sites offering a Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin Cree Language and Culture program, to having FNMI Graduation Coaches in four junior highs and six high schools, along with every school developing an action plan that meets the individual needs of their Indigenous students. This work happens because of the commitment to serving students that exists at all levels of our Division.

The story that is shared on these pages is a work in progress as the journey to Truth and Reconciliation is the journey of a lifetime....

THE EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees has been walking the path to Truth and Reconciliation for many years. In 2011, the Board established the Council of Elders as the authentic Indigenous voice in Edmonton Catholic Schools. They developed Board Policy 19 - Indigenous Voice, in collaboration with the elders, to recognize and honour that authentic voice. The Board of Trustees meets with the Council on an ongoing basis to engage in learning,

dialogue and planning. The Board has publicly shown its commitment by beginning its Public Meetings with a Land and Treaty acknowledgement. Following the example of the Board, the Edmonton Catholic Schools Treaty 6 Acknowledgement is used to begin Catholic Educational Leadership meetings, staff and School Council meetings, Graduation Ceremonies and Division events.

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S GOALS

When the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were released, Superintendent Joan Carr consulted with the Council of Elders to seek their wisdom on how she could best respond to those calls through her work. As a result, the following became part of the Superintendent's Goals, which are rooted in our Division Plan for Continuous Growth, beginning in the spring of 2015 and continuing to date:

GOAL SIX: FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT STUDENTS ARE SUCCESSFUL

6.4 (Continued from 2015-16)

Explore the "Education – Call to Action" recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. After dialogue with the Council of Elders, focus will be on the following:

- Keeping Language and Culture (TRC "Call to Action" #10 iv);

- Grandparents Circle (TRC "Call to Action" #10 vi);
- Have our schools welcome Indigenous parents, grandparents' and foster parents' participation (TRC "Call to Action" #10 vi);
- Provide cultural and spiritual awareness and protocols to all ECSD staff. Newly hired ECSD staff will be provided mandatory basic First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural awareness (ECSD "Call to Action").

The Superintendent meets on an ongoing basis with the Council to collaborate on all matters that benefit from Indigenous voice in Edmonton Catholic Schools. She also meets monthly with the Manager of the Council of Elders to collaboratively foster conditions that promote the environment to improve educational opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. The Superintendent also proudly represents our Division in events around our city that honour Indigenous peoples and history. These events include the City of Edmonton Treaty 6 Recognition Day and Orange Shirt Day.

THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS



Established in 2011, the Council plays a significant role in establishing cultural protocols, Indigenous programs and support for their community. The role of the council includes:

- An ongoing relationship based on support with the Board of Trustees and Superintendent;
- To provide cultural information to the Division, staff and students;
- To foster a link between the Indigenous community and the Edmonton Catholic School Division; and
- Support for Indigenous students and their families.

The Council of Elders works directly with the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services Enhancement (LSE) to ensure that all cultural activities, educational programs and supports for families are filtered through authentic traditional values. This Council ensures that the Indigenous people have an active voice in supporting Indigenous students in the Division.

“ **WHAT I KNOW THE TRUTH IS...** *it was a good thing that they wanted to educate our children and have them learn the English language but in our communities, not away from our communities and culture in the Residential Schools. In my lifetime I have seen how it has destroyed my people including myself. I was never proud of who I was a Cree woman. That was until I took back the power and said ‘no, I won’t listen to those words anymore. I will make a good life for myself, my children and my grandchildren.’* **”**

Betty Letendre (Manager, ECSD Council of Elders)
Betty is the fourth generation, her children and grandchildren the fifth and sixth. It is predicted that it will take seven generations to bring about reconciliation.

MESSAGE FROM BETTY LETENDRE

A vision for the future...having a vision for the future comes hand in hand with being inspired. It's been an honour and a pleasure to be part of a history, bearing witness to the truth of Canada's Residential School legacy.

This story is not new, it has been in Canada for longer than 150 years and yes, it is one of the darkest and most troubling chapters in our collective history in our country Canada.

Again, let me underline OUR Country, OUR story, OUR history, OUR hurt, OUR healing.

My inspiration comes from witnessing the willingness to create awareness of this troubling chapter, it is through the opening, unveiling, revealing, educating and truth where we will find hope for reconciliation. Truth is the key ingredient to reconciling- without truth there can be no reconciliation. As we open this dialog our communities will come together. Healing and moving forward into a different chapter is now. Let's turn the page and take this step together.

Working together towards the healing of our Residential Schools legacy we must understand and recognize the importance of reconciliation and establish our purpose. Our purpose is not to assign blame to any individuals or parties but rather to bring understanding through the followership of all groups.

The process has already started through the Truth and Reconciliation, it is up to us to be willing and open to learn from one another to reach a common understanding, to strengthen our relationship with a vision of having a better future, not just for us but for our children and those yet to come.

Fortifying this foundation requires a heartfelt resolution to start at the root of the problem and openly address our past wrongs. Moving forward requires trust. Trust of self and others needs to be restored. Trust of others is a bit easier to understand yet trust of self can be a bit more difficult, as it requires us to look deep within to see what we are not only capable of doing, also what we are capable of hiding, ignoring and allowing - this is our brokenness; which brings us full circle to truth, truth from within and without.

We share in the wounding as we shall share in the healing. Let us come together as a people motivated to move forward. To lose our misconceptions and stereotypes, this can only be done as a community by coming together. I or any individual can do this on their own. That isn't what this is about; this is about a community healing for the betterment of our own consciousness our future and the future of our children.

“ A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drove ...but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”
author unknown

Always in Friendship,
Ms. Betty Letendre
Manager, Council of Elders

CEREMONY AND PRAYER

SMUDGING: Is a very special gift and is treated with great respect by Indigenous peoples. Sweetgrass was given to us to carry our prayers to the Creator/God. When we smudge or cleanse ourselves with the smoke, the prayer is for our minds to have clarity of thought, our hands to do good work, our legs to walk a straight path, our hearts to be strong and from our mouth comes truth. Smudging is done with earnest intent; it is through earnest prayer the Grandfathers and Grandmothers are able to carry the smoke to the Creator/God.

PRAYER: When Sweetgrass is gathered in the summer months (along with various other medicines), an offering of tobacco along with a traditional prayer taught by an Elder or passed down by generations are given to Mother Earth. We ask her to have pity on us and to continue to provide this special gift of Sweetgrass to us (teachings on gathering are passed down from the family and can be taught by an Elder).

HISTORY: It is said that when we light our smudge, the Grandfathers and Grandmothers of the Spirit World see us as stars and come near to hear our heartfelt prayers. As the smoke rises, our Grandfathers and Grandmothers carry our prayers to the Creator. In Cree, this offering is known as 'wihkimakasikan' – all natural from Mother Earth.

SYMBOLISM: The three strands of the Sweetgrass braid represent mind, body and spirit working together in unity. This mindfulness is also applied when braiding hair - past (our ancestors), present (within us) and future (those not yet born). The past, present and future are seen as being in this moment and all that we are is a result of our ancestors and everything we do today contributes to the children of the future.

LESSON: Sweetgrass is a teacher of kindness – a gift from our mother, the Earth, for she teaches us to be human. Grass is walked on, mowed and even burned ... yet it continues to grow back. We may experience similar feelings in life, yet we must continue growing, stand back up and allow life to be renewing. Sweetgrass is a teacher of duality it has two sides to it, as we humans do – a rough side and a smooth side. The rough side are where we need to make changes.

PROTOCOL: When one requires a braid of Sweetgrass for personal use, tobacco is offered to an Elder/Teacher, along with a gift. Proper protocol is very important, especially if you want more understanding and teachings of the very special gift. It is also said, in the animal world they too have awareness of this sacredness of sweetgrass, not even the buffalo will eat it.

TEACHINGS: This writing of the Sweetgrass (or writings on tobacco, sage and cedar) are not intended for teaching but an awareness. For those of you who seek the teaching of the Sweetgrass, please approach the proper Elders/Teachers who carry this teaching. There is no one way. Each Elder has their own special way of teaching; however all ceremonies have one common theme and that is "Prayer."



FOUR SACRED MEDICINES

The four sacred medicines are tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass. They are for personal or ceremonial use and can be placed in sacred bundles. These medicines are used individually, in combinations or all together to smudge oneself for cleansing of the mind, body and spirit. Starting with the hands, they are placed in the smoke and wrung to release unwanted energy. Your hands then cup together gathering the smoke and fan over your head, so you can think clearly; your ears, so you can hear the good things in life of others and of yourself; your mouth, so you can speak of good things and say kind words to one another; your heart so you can feel good about yourself and others. Lastly, you smudge your whole self so you can be blessed for the the day.

TOBACCO – Ositemaw: Tobacco is the first medicine. The good medicine as we have known it. Our medicines are provided by Mother Earth and Grandfather Sun for life in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms. Our sacred medicines are provided for our use and are not owned except as a gift from our Mother Earth. She does not ask us to plant seeds or water her garden, her only request is that we keep her clean and harvest only what we need.

The originality of this scared medicine goes back in time. (Kayas long ago in Cree language) Indigenous people who have used this sacred medicine and have never surrendered this sacred medicine but accept the responsibility to be good stewards of the land.

Today they are many forms of tobacco. Commercial tobacco is commonly used today for protocols for gifting to those who carry the Knowledge and Wisdom of our sacred traditions Cree teachings and other Indigenous Teachings.

Mother Earth teaches us to work in harmony as one cannot accomplish many tasks without others, just as the medicine people of tobacco do not work alone but for us reflects this principle.

The sacred contact we have with our Mother the Erath should never be taken for granted, our Mother the Earth provides all our medicines and to honour the principle reciprocity, we never take without giving in return. Commercial tobacco is used in protocol to reflect this principle but in many cases is not understood fully by those who have not taken time to acquire these teachings.

Elders prepare all tobacco from natural herbs that are gathered throughout the spring and summer.

This writing is a small example to what is yet to be learned of who we are as The First Peoples of Canada and it is passed down through our Knowledge Keepers.

Niya Kehteya (The Old One)

Elizabeth Letendre

SAGE: Sage has strong medicinal properties that can cleanse and purify. Sage is the most common medicine used to smudge people at a large gathering as many people may not follow the other necessary protocols for using all the four medicines together. Sage can also be used in combination with other sacred medicines for smudging.

Sage is gathered by offering tobacco along with a traditional gathering prayer passed on through the generations. It is gathered in the summer when at its matured stage yet before it starts to seed. It is gathered and dried for future use. Once dried it can be stored and kept as large bundles, individual/personal smudge size or separate the leaves from the stock for it to be rolled in the hand or mixed with other medicines for various uses. In Alberta we are familiar with either Buffalo Sage or Horse Sage.

CEDAR: Cedar is a medicinal plant that has many healing properties. When Cedar is lit in a smudge, it emits a sweet smell that is calming. It is used in ceremonial structures such as the Sweatlodge and Sundance arbor for the purpose of providing protection and welcoming the spirits that come and help us in our healing.

Some people use cedar as a medicine. They may boil it as a tea and drink it, or bathe in cedar water, warding off sickness.

Cedar is gathered by offering tobacco along with a traditional gathering prayer passed on through the generations. It is gathered in the summer months when life has returned to the branches and before fall when the life leaves the branches. It is gathered and dried for future use. Once dried it can be stored and kept as is and decided later on future use or can be removed from the stems and powdered to be mixed in with other sacred medicines.

SWEETGRASS: Sweetgrass is said to be “the sacred hair of Mother Earth.” It grows at the outer edges of marshy areas on dry land. Sweetgrass is used in smudging ceremonies and gives off a sweet smell, hence its name “Sweetgrass.” Braids of sweetgrass are also used as a teaching tool on various subjects such as; mind, body and spirit; past, present and future; mother, father and child.

Sweetgrass is gathered by offering tobacco along with a traditional gathering prayer passed on through the generations. It is gathered in the summer months and is harvested at its full length. Weather permitting harvesting can be up until the first frost or signs of discoloration.

Harvesting is done with the utmost respect for the plant. The grass is removed from the base of the plant. Should you accidentally remove a plant by the root it is customary to replant it immediately. Harvesting must be only in the amounts you know you will use. You must always leave some unharvested.



COUNCIL OF ELDERS PIPE CEREMONY PROTOCOL

The Pipe Ceremony is used to welcome the Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer Equinox and to honour what we have been given – the Fall harvest, the medicines and the opportunity to come together in prayer and celebration. As with sweetgrass and other medicines, out of respect you remove your jewelry, glasses etc.

When you enter the circle of the pipe ceremony, you will move clockwise and be directed where to sit by the Elder or Oskâpêw (Cree word for helper). Women will sit on one side and men on the other.

Everyone and everything that inhabits Mother Earth belongs and is welcome in the circle. When you enter the circle, you will sit quietly and reflect on your prayers and requests prior to the start of the pipe ceremony.

Men will sit cross-legged and women sit with their legs straight in front of them or bent to the side. Women do not sit cross-legged. Women honour themselves by wearing a skirt during the pipe ceremony.

The pipe will be prepared by the Elder and their Oskâpêw (Cree word for helper). The Elder will usually explain what will happen. Again, each Elder is different as each pipe ceremony is different.

After the preparation, the Elder will ask the individual who has asked for the ceremony why the pipe has been requested and what protocol that has been followed. This means that tobacco and other offerings have been made for their request. You may want to bring your own tobacco for your own prayers and requests.

The pipe will be passed around four times in a clockwise direction. When you receive the pipe, take it in both your hands and do not turn it around. If you wish, you may put it to your mouth, puff (do not inhale) and blow the smoke out. If you choose not to smoke the pipe, touch your heart with the pipe and pass it on, this always shows great respect.

The Elder/Elders will bless the food that has been prepared for the feast that will follow the pipe ceremony.

EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ANNUAL GRACE FOR THE HEART AND SOUL

The Council of Elders host multiple sessions each year at the annual Care for Creation-Grace for the Heart and Soul staff faith formation afternoon with Edmonton Catholic Schools. Please see the list of a few highlighted sessions that have been hosted over the years with their description.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION: This session had Elder Jerry Wood presenting on Residential Schools, Sixties Scoop, Child Welfare and the multi-generational affects it has had on Aboriginal people today. Participants learned about the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) seventh and final National Event that took place in Edmonton, March 27-30, 2014.

BLESSINGS WITH MEDICINES: This session was hosted by Elder Betty Letendre focusing on the many kinds of sacred medicines used with most First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Participants learned about the sacred medicines, protocol, medicines used for smudging, ceremonial and medicinal purposes.

WOMEN'S TEACHINGS: This session was hosted by Elder Betty Letendre focusing on the gifts of women, teachings passed down from generation to generation, the roles of women from young adults into womanhood. These sacred teachings allow women to view themselves as sacred beings of Mother Earth honouring our womanhood.

SPIRITUALITY OF THE DANCE: This session was hosted by Elder Francis Alexis focusing on the different types of Pow Wow dance and their significant meanings. Participants learned the different types of dances performed by dancers along with their spiritual meaning, regalia of Men's Grass, Traditional, Fancy and Women's Jingle, Fancy, Shawl and Traditional dress.

Along with hoop dancing and jigging, each dance was showcased, preformed and explained to the viewers. Participants learned about upcoming Pow Wow hosted in surrounding communities throughout the summer months.

THE BLANKET EXERCISE: This session was hosted by Elder Gilman Cardinal who smudged the group and had a talking circle focusing on the blanket exercise. The blanket is a teaching tool to share the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

MURDERED AND MISSING INDIGENOUS

WOMEN: Participants viewed the documentary with BBC Current Affairs 2017 investigative documentary "Canada's Lost Girls" with a focus on Edmonton's missing Indigenous women. Elder Betty Letendre shared her story of how she was affected by MMIW.

The guest speaker was April Eve Wiberg, the founding member of the grassroots group, The Stolen Sisters and Brothers Awareness Movement, who has organized the annual Stolen Sisters Awareness Walk since 2007.

Ms. Wiberg shared her experience in a powerpoint and discussed a community database of Missing and Murdered people initiative she has prepared. Participants viewed the documentary of "Canada's Lost Girls"

HEARTBEAT OF THE CREATOR - SACRED DRUM-

MING: Participants joined Sherryl Sewepagaham in an afternoon of singing drum songs to enlighten your musical spirit and creative soul. The heartbeat of Mother Earth was explored, and the voice told the story through the songs. These songs come from many areas of Alberta and Canada. All traditional hand drums and shakers were provided.

CONTINUED ANNUAL GRACE FOR THE HEART AND SOUL

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION (TRC) *We All Have a Role to Play - presented by Dr. Niigaan Sinclair*

Dr. Niigaan Sinclair is a dynamic speaker who, through narrative, brought understanding, positivity and reflection to the work around Truth and Reconciliation within Canada and how we all play a role. Niigaan used his wealth of knowledge from both formal and lived experiences to empower and inspire us to look toward the future and ask what we can do today that will support and continue to build positive relationships in Reconciliation.

Many will also be familiar with Niigaan's father, Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair who was the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

SWEAT LODGE CEREMONY IN ENOCH FIRST NATION: The sweat lodge teaching and ceremony was hosted by Elder Fred Campiou. Participants had a teaching of the meaning of the sweat lodge then participated in the sweat lodge ceremony. After the ceremony everyone enjoyed a traditional feast.

NAME CHANGE FROM ABORIGINAL LEARNING SERVICES TO INDIGENOUS LEARNING SERVICES

The Council of Elders meets periodically with the Board of Trustees to review and discuss relevant cultural teachings. During a meeting in 2017, the Council of Elders requested a name change of the department of Aboriginal Learning Services to Indigenous Learning Services.

The term Indigenous came into wide usage during the 1970s when Aboriginal groups organized transnationally and pushed for greater presence in the United Nations ("UN"). In the UN, "Indigenous" is used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by

industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others. Further, Indigenous legal scholar S. James Anaya offers this description:

“ Today, the term Indigenous refers broadly to the living descendants of pre-invasion inhabitants of lands now dominated by others. Indigenous peoples, nations, or communities are culturally distinctive groups that find themselves engulfed by settler societies born of the forces of empire and conquest.”



According to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples have a right to cultural sovereignty and self-determination. Educational institutions include the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in their curriculum, including teacher training.

Previously, the Indigenous population may have been referred to as:

Aboriginal - The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people — Indians, Métis and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

First Nations - The term “First Nations” came into use in 1970 to replace the word “Indian”; although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. This term generally does not include Inuit or Métis.

Native - meaning, “born in.” The term “native Canadian” could also legitimately apply to anyone born in Canada. Native was derived from the Latin word *natus* meaning “born,” which is used to mean a group who lived in some place before the arrival of Europeans and eventually evolved to replace the word Indian.

Indian - In 1493 Columbus sent a letter home identifying the folks he met as “Los Indios.” The term “Indian” has been applied to the first occupants of the Americas. It is laden with history and associations, and some argue the whole notion of “Indian” is purely a white man’s construction. Exceptions for use of this term such as Indian Act (federal statute) and Indian Reserve (defined in the Indian Act), until such changes are made in the legal documents.

As a world, we are growing in understanding and principles. Collectively, we are righting wrongs and moving forward towards a more enlightened, educated and level of awareness that was not possible until this time. As such, we continue to move forward collectively making conscious and enlightened changes.

Edmonton Catholic School Division is one of the most forward-thinking educational institutions in Canada and we pride ourselves in our ability to continually reflect progressive educational growth and awareness.

Thus, the Edmonton Catholic School Division honoured the request from the Council of Elders and effective May 1, 2017 respectfully changed the name of Aboriginal Learning Services to Indigenous Learning Services.

INDIGENOUS LEARNING SERVICES

Indigenous students and families find a greater voice in Edmonton Catholic Schools through Indigenous Learning Services, which is housed at Sacred Heart Centre. A team of consultants and facilitators has supported both the academic and cultural needs of students for over 20 years. Pipe ceremonies, smudging, round dances, traditional dance, drummers, along with family social supports have paved the way for continued Indigenous student success in the Division. ECSD's Braided Journeys program is designed to support Indigenous students in finding their identity, academic achievement and establishing a culture where they can find a home.

At Edmonton Catholic Schools, Indigenous Learning Services plays a significant role in moving reconciliation forward. In keeping with the goals of supporting culture and learning, the department has Indigenous Curriculum Consultants who work directly with teachers to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to meet curriculum topics such as the TRC, Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop as well as infusing Indigenous perspectives into all curriculum.

In the past, Indigenous Learning Services, ILS (previously named Aboriginal Learning Services) programs have focused on supporting families in trauma and helping students connect with their traditional cultural roots. Today, the goals of ILS have expanded and are more focused on teaching and learning. The ILS consultants are collaborating with other Division curriculum consultants to educate teachers to meet the new Teacher Quality Standards as set out by Alberta Education.

“ LIKE MOST CANADIANS, *teachers were not taught the Indigenous perspective of Canadian history in their formal education. Instruction in schools and universities taught history through a European worldview. After participating in cultural awareness workshops, such as the Blanket Exercise, teachers are often outraged that they didn't know their Canadian history, that it was not part of their schooling, nor was it part of teacher education in university.* **”**

(L.C., Indigenous Learning Services Consultant)

The TRC Calls to Action implore educators at all levels to teach age-appropriate curriculum on Residential Schools, treaties and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada as a mandatory requirement in schools. (TRC Calls to Action) ECSD is implementing a well thought out program that will educate all staff with respect to teaching, designing programs and supporting Indigenous children and their families.

Edmonton Catholic Schools did not wait for new curriculum to be written before making significant changes to how Indigenous consultants supported teachers. Indigenous consultants have teamed up with curricular consultants in the Division to ensure that every in-service gives voice to the perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people of Alberta.

In particular, Social Studies teachers recognized program weakness in the curriculum and the way they have traditionally approached the issues of Indigenous people.

“ I THOUGHT I WAS... *but realize now that it was superficial. I rarely went beyond the textbook story. I didn't understand the complete picture and therefore could not hit an emotional chord with the students.*

Prior to the TRC work in the Division, the Social 10 students made memory bags to support the cultural teaching expectation of the curriculum. It was good and the students enjoyed making them, but it didn't elicit the emotional response that the Blanket Exercise creates. Personal connections were made for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the class. The Blanket Exercise allows the students to 'walk through the experience' therefore hitting an emotional response that supports cultural understanding amongst all students. **”**

(High School Social Studies Teacher)

“ *Canadian history teachers don't know what it is they need to teach. Would we let a math teacher teach math without the correct background? Yet, many of our social teachers do not know the facts behind the colonization of our Indigenous people. Canada will not be able to reconcile*

until the myth is burst and the truth is taught in our Canadian schools. Educators have a higher level of responsibility to work towards reconciliation and stop the horrific injustice in schools, health and the justice system.”

(E.W., ECSD Braided Journeys Staff)

TRC events and the cultural teachings of ECSD Indigenous consultants have increased teachers' awareness of not only the 'truth' of the Indigenous people but also the need to touch the hearts of students. Comments made by teachers throughout the Division following Indigenous in-services reinforces the need for Canadian teachers to be taught the realities of Canadian history.

“ **MY KNOWLEDGE WAS MINIMAL...** *I am embarrassed to say how little I knew about the treatments of our Indigenous people and the attempt by former governments to assimilate them into Canadian culture. I look at Indigenous people differently now. I have so much more empathy with parents and students who find it difficult to trust schooling based on their family's experiences with Residential Schools. It is difficult for Indigenous people to trust the leaders of our schools, governments and churches based on the experiences. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has allowed Canada to move forward in the right direction first with the apologies, then with the stories, and now with the teaching and learning in schools. This heightened awareness has opened the door for discussion, literature and Canadian people to speak openly about Indigenous culture.”* (M.F., Teacher)

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT... *While researching the history of Canada's Indigenous people for her social studies classes, Maria (Grade 5 teacher) came across the documents of the TRC. At first, she had difficulty believing what she was learning about the role that the Canadian Government played in downgrading the education and lifestyle of Indigenous people. Now after attending many workshops held by Indigenous consultants, she holds the position of*

FNMI Liaison at the school. She is invested in the responsibility of sharing the truth with other teachers, a role she is proud to serve in.

With Indigenous Education at the forefront of Edmonton Catholic Schools' goals, it was a natural fit for Superintendent Carr to answer Mayor Steven Mandel's request to join him as a witness when the Commission came to Edmonton. The TRC held six community meetings across the country, (Winnipeg 2010, Inuvik 2011, Atlantic National Event 2011, Saskatoon 2012, Montreal 2013, Vancouver 2014) before coming to Edmonton in 2014. These national events were designed to inform Canadians about the history of the Residential Schools system, gather statements of former students and their families, and to lead all Canadians towards reconciliation. Reconciliation, in this context, is about coming to terms with the events of the past and establishing a respectful and healthy relationship among people.

“ **RECONCILIATION** *among all people can only be achieved by recognizing and accepting the historical truth. The history of Indigenous people in Canada is a dark history, one that has been forgotten and it is only now 150 years later through the TRC that we are moving forward with actions, adding truthful history to the curriculum and helping our Indigenous people become part of Canada's communities.”*

(Betty Letendre, Manager, Council of Elders)



THE MOUNTAIN CREE CAMP SCHOOL- KISIKO AWASIS KISKINAHAMAWIN

The Mountain Cree Camp (more commonly known in the past as the Smallboy Camp) was established in 1967 by Chief Robert (Bobtail) Smallboy and Lazarus Roan from the Ermineskin Band. The Ermineskin Band is part of the four bands that make up the reserves in Maskwachis, formerly known as Hobbema. Other members included Mark Yellowbird, Peter Rowan, Alex Shortneck, Fred Nadeau, their spouses and families. The intent was to establish a community that would be guided by their strong belief in the 'Natural Law' consisting of traditional Cree values, spirituality and ceremonies. The first camp was established on the Kootenay Plains, in the foothills near Nordegg. In 1971, the camp relocated to the Muskiki Lake area midway between Robb and Nordegg, a location they occupy today.

Through the Indian and Northern Affairs Commission (INAC), the Federal Government initially established a school on the Camp site. This school consisted of a double-wide portable classroom and a single-wide portable classroom. Neither of the portable classrooms had running water or indoor washroom or shower facilities. At its peak, enrolment during the 1980s, the school had approximately 90 students enrolled. The delivery of education was provided by a certified teacher along with elders and members from the community. Instruction included the Cree Language and Culture. In 1997, the Federal Government rescinded financial support for the camp, ostensibly because the camp was off reserve. The loss in funding resulted in the eventual closure of the school. Thus, no formal educational program was provided to the students until 2005.

Alberta Education, during the 2005/2006 school year, attempted to establish a program for the Mountain Cree Camp students by entering into an agreement with a provincial school board to deliver services. When no school board stepped forward to assume the operational responsibility, Alberta Education entered into an agreement with a private contractor to provide Superintendent services and to work with Alberta Education and Alberta Infrastructure to establish a school onsite. The school was operated for four years through this arrangement.

In the spring of 2009, Alberta Education reached an agreement with Edmonton Catholic Separate School Division to operate Kisiko Awasis Kiskinahamawin for a two school-year period. Since then the contract has been renewed four times and ECSD will continue providing educational support until August 31, 2021. Edmonton Catholic Schools is proud to count this school as one of our own and the ongoing success of our students in this school is an ongoing cause for celebration!





THE POWER OF THE BLANKET EXERCISE



The TRC introduced Edmonton Catholic Schools to an interactive exercise designed to build understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. The exercise takes participants on a walk through pre-contact, treaty making, colonization and resistance.

Staff and students have participated in over 50 Blanket Exercises throughout the Division. In some situations, the whole school staff was involved, in others it was offered as one choice of activities at professional development sessions where the Indigenous curriculum consultants have offered cultural awareness sessions. It was offered as an activity for all Division leaders at a Catholic Educational Leadership meeting. The power of the Blanket Exercise comes from the authentic root of the knowledge. As the Indigenous consultants facilitate the story, it becomes their story, sharing the struggle that families have endured whether it was in Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, or the breakdown of family and community.

For many in the Division, the Blanket Exercise is the game changer in bringing the head and the heart closer together. Through this interactive activity, students and staff walk through Canadian Indigenous history. As the blankets representing the traditional lands are folded into smaller squares and/or taken completely off the floor the hardships of the Indigenous people speak for themselves. How could the Indigenous people continue to build their culture and their livelihood when children were removed from their families, illnesses were brought into the reserves, and resources to the people were continually being eliminated?

Following the in-services, high school Social Studies teachers reported changes in how they delivered

the curriculum. Prior to participating in the Blanket Exercise, the teachers would skim quickly over the information in the textbook concerning residential schools. Now with further knowledge and understanding, teachers are more inclined to go deeper than the short paragraph in the textbook by bringing in consultants, elders, and other resources to support the program. Colonization of the Indigenous people concepts are being used to teach the skills, knowledge and attitudes expected within the curriculum leaving the students with a much stronger knowledge base of the issues. Teachers now have the skills to touch the hearts of the students.

The Blanket Exercise does an excellent job of displaying the historical injustices towards Indigenous people, which would, if not handled properly lead to a personal feeling of blame. The apologies from the leaders of our government and churches release us from taking personal blame for what has happened. Instead of receiving blame, the Indigenous consultants encourage participants to take pride in sharing the truths, helping others to acknowledge the need to reconcile and invite participants to become part of the movement redefining the message of peace and acceptance.

The script of the Blanket Exercise gives the participants the knowledge, yet it is the stories in the open sharing circle that bring the heart alive. The reaction of the teachers to the script of the story has sparked Indigenous consultants to move forward in creating other teaching materials. Schools who previously concentrated their Indigenous Day celebrations in June with fun cultural activities are now focusing on curriculum topics such as Indigenous literature, Residential Schools, Sixties Scoop, as well as continue to celebrate the rich culture of the Indigenous people.

O'LEARY STUDENTS HELP BRING THE BLANKET EXERCISE TO EDMONTON...

“The first time I experienced the Blanket Exercise was at the March TRC event in Edmonton. Four of my students were invited by KAIROS to facilitate the session as part of the youth day. Pam and I knew it was something special as we watched it unfold, something that needs to be shared with others.” (Donita, Grad Coach)

Since then, Braided Journey students throughout the city have been trained to facilitate the activity. “It adds special emotion to the event when it is your students sharing the story.” (Dave Bouma, Principal)

THIS IS MY FAMILY'S STORY... After working through the original Blanket Exercise, Pam Sparklingeyes, Braided Journeys Manager, reworked the script to tell the story of Western Indigenous people. By including Treaty 6 stories, Pam has developed a process that allows both Indigenous people and those with European descent to identify with the harsh realities of our history.

“For the first time, I feel real hope for reconciliation between all Canadians. I had an easier time growing up than my dad did, and my children have an easier time than I had and knowing that there could be real reconciliation for my grandchildren and great grandchildren because of the work of the TRC gives me real hope.”

(Pam Sparklingeyes, Braided Journeys Manager)

“IN THE BLANKET EXERCISE, I WAS PLACED IN A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL... I was told that I was separated from my family and would not be able to practice my culture. I felt like I was put in the shoes of my ancestors. I began to understand why my family didn't identify as Indigenous. I came off the blanket crying because I think...

it was a real moment. That is the moment that I said I am Métis and this is the truth. My mother didn't acknowledge her treaty heritage and therefore I grew up not knowing that I was Métis. The Blanket Exercise was the catalyst for me to research the truth and the culture looking for my place in this truth. It brought me to a good spot; pushing me to the person I am today.”

(Former Student)

“THE BLANKET EXERCISE IMPACTS STUDENTS MORE EMOTIONALLY... Cultural activities, such as making memory bags, meet the curriculum outcomes of Social Studies 10. However, changing teaching strategies to include the Blanket Exercise has given my students a deeper understanding and knowledge base of Canadian history. As the students walk through history receiving blankets and having them removed evokes an emotional response. I witness this deeper emotional response during the talking circles following the exercise. It has become a very valuable teaching tool for me.”

(Rachel Roberts, LSL)

“WE THOUGHT HE WAS DOING GOD'S WORK... The Blanket Exercise has caused teachers throughout the Division to rethink what they already thought they knew.”

(Joanne Friedt, Principal)

Joanne Friedt fondly remembers her childhood in Ontario where her father was a teacher in the local residential schools. As a child, she played in the hallways and welcomed Indigenous students into her home. These children spent Christmas and other holidays with their family when they were not able to go back to their home community. She grew up considering them to be her friends, her brothers and sisters from other families.

THE STORIES OF OUR SCHOOLS



Each of our schools is on a very special journey towards Truth and Reconciliation. Following, you will find a sampling of the many stories which were shared during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years.

ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH MACNEIL CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The staff at AJM participated in the Blanket Exercise, which was led by students from Louis St. Laurent. One of the students also performed a Jingle Dance dressed in regalia she had made. Participating in the reenactment of the decimation of the First Nations populations was eye-opening for all involved. Some of us, being new to Canada, were unaware of the history. Some of us knew but hadn't comprehended the devastation of the First Nations people. We all had an opportunity to share at the end of the exercise, but there were many who were overcome by emotion and needed time to process. We were grateful for the learning opportunity and were touched by the leadership of the students.

For our AJM Faith Day, we borrowed educational kits from Sacred Heart Centre. We were fortunate to have one of the staff from ILS come in for storytelling that day. We did Métis flag bead-work and flower art, as well. Students loved the stories and crafts; these activities were among the most popular that day.



**AUSTIN O'BRIEN
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

As a staff and school, we have lived in whole or in part, the following activities and events:

- Blanket Exercise with entire staff
- Blanket Exercise in Social 10 classes
- welcome event and promotion of opportunities for all self-identified Indigenous students
- transitioning events for incoming Grade 9s
- cultural presence (smudge ceremonies, sweat ceremony)
- staff smudging ceremony
- Indigenous Honouring Ceremony for all graduating FNMI students
- monitoring & tracking for academic success and completion
- workshops with Indigenous Learning Services - idea sharing and resource distribution to teachers
- post-secondary tours/presentations specifically designed for Indigenous students (NAIT & MacEwan)
- Indigenous representation at our celebration of culture on our Multicultural Day
- Treaty 6 flag acquisition at AOB for use in school events

These activities have allowed students to have a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture and history. For students, the challenge of mind was in the knowledge of each event and in the challenge of heart, to deeper understand what struggles and issues that face the Indigenous people.

For staff, the challenge to mind was also to take in multiple sets of data and information and training to better know the needs and supports necessary for Indigenous students and the challenge of heart was to internalize and then explain their interpretations of each event and how it relates to them and their assignment in the school and community.

One of our Grade 12 students, Mackenzie Thunder Starchief performed a beautiful traditional Indigenous dance and then followed it with another in dedication and honour to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This dance was a heartfelt message that echoed the work we are doing at AOB as we move from head to heart in understanding the struggles of our Indigenous population.

**BEN CALF ROBE/ST. CLARE CATHOLIC
ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

A group of Ben Calf Robe students from Grades 4-7, gathered with students from three other Edmonton Catholic Schools, to learn, practice and perform a multi-tribal dance, including ladies' Traditional, Fancy and Jingle and men's Traditional, Grass and Fancy for our Celebration of the Arts. BCR students were proud to perform at other festivities such as the Ben Calf Robe Pow Wow, National Indigenous Days at the Expo Centre and for other school divisions. Students were led by ILS consultants Aaron Zorthian and Amanda Lamothe, Council of Elder staff Lloyd Cardinal and Ben Calf Robe Assistant Principal Diane Lefebvre.

For this experience to happen, Ben Calf Robe staff, students and parents engaged in fundraising activities to be able to source and purchase updated regalia. Our Grade 4 boys were especially inspired by their regalia, thrilled to suit up in their bustles, as for many this was the first exposure to cultural dance. At the end of the Celebration of the Arts performance, the first time that our community experienced the dance, one of the boys' parents expressed that he had tears in his eyes. Another Grade 4 boy's mother has led a family fundraiser for her son's own regalia; he is halfway there and with the loan of our bustle, he performed his first solo dance at the Royal Alexandra hospital on National Indigenous People's Day, joyfully dancing through the wards.

So many in our school and Division community gathered together this year to promote Indigenous drumming, singing and especially dance for our children; which involved much scheduling, shopping, preparing and rejuvenating of regalia all for the joy of connection and celebration.

**BISHOP GRESCHUK
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

During our 2018 – 2019 school year, we, at Bishop Greschuk School, redesigned a space at the heart of our school to be our new BG Chapel. As a focus, mediation area, we had a wall designed with three works of art from the Sacred Heart Trilogy, "The Dance of the Eagle." Together they celebrate the united family, the Father, the Mother and the Child. This union is strengthened by the recognition that all its sacred parts are equal in value, as each needs the other to complete the family circle. The symbolism in the painting represents different beliefs shared by the people of the Sacred Heart parish. Life is a dance of enthusiasm, integrity and power, keeping time



with the heartbeat and cycle of Mother earth. Our Indigenous art and birch décor with its deep meaning has helped us to create a sacred place for our students.

Further celebrating Indigenous culture, Bishop Greschuk School community enjoyed a Hoop Dancer presentation by Teddy Anderson. Teaching others about First Nation's hoop dance, while at the same time, sharing a crucially important message of unity and harmony, is what brings joy to Teddy. He will return next year with a week-long residency for our BG students and so our journey will continue.

ÉCOLE BISHOP SAVARYN CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Our school has engaged in many activities in light of the TRC Calls to Action.

STAFF PD/ RETREAT AT STAR OF THE NORTH RETREAT HOUSE ON MISSION HILL IN ST.

ALBERT: We toured the museum, crypt and graveyard with someone from the St. Albert Historical Society, reflecting on the history of the area and how it relates to us today, especially the relationship between the church leaders of the time and the First Nations and Métis settlers. The staff retreat challenged us all to reflect on how we want to continue to develop as an inclusive

community in line with our Catholic tradition. Learning more of the history of Catholic education in Alberta helps us to understand and not repeat the hurtful words and actions of the past. It was a very rich experience as together we toured the crypt and graveyard in prayer on a beautiful snowy All Saint's Day in Alberta!

We hosted "First Nations, Métis and Inuit Curriculum Learning Week" together with the consultants from ILS and other presenters. Sonja Willier spoke at our opening assembly about inclusive communities and her family's story. The Principal read the children's book, *STOLEN WORDS*, by Melanie Florence to the assembly of students. The book, *STOLEN WORDS*, opened conversation about children attending Residential Schools and losing their language and culture. It is beautifully told and touched the hearts of all of us. We also invited the students and staff (dancers, jiggers and drummers) from Ben Calf Robe School to perform for our students on the Friday afternoon.

Our school-wide art activity had each child decorate a feather for our bulletin board, "Every Child Matters." This will stay up for the year in the centre of the school with a WELCOME sign written in many FNMI languages. Our bulletin board display invites our school community to live out our goal to be truly inclusive in our words and actions as we believe "EVERY CHILD MATTERS," no matter what their race, language, colour, gender.



ÉCOLE FRÈRE ANTOINE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

We, the staff at École Frère Antoine, have been building our foundational knowledge with the guidance of ILS consultants and ATA resources. The Blanket Exercise, led by three consultants, was such an insightful experience for staff in 2017 that the Grade 4 to 6 teachers have worked through the Blanket Exercise in their own classes. Several other EduKits have been borrowed from Indigenous Learning Services to help support and supplement the curriculum in our classes. Our staff also participated in an in-service led by Indigenous Services about the FNMI standards of the new TQS and how teachers can improve their FNMI knowledge of our Canadian history. To provide opportunities for self-paced professional development, all components of the Professional Learning Peddles: Activities to Build Teachers' Foundational Knowledge have been shared on our EFA Staff Google Classroom and discussed at staff meetings. A resource center, including the Stepping Stones Series, is also accessible in the staffroom.

Staff and students have participated in multiple events and activities to deepen our understanding of our Canadian history:

- Orange Shirt Day is a school-wide, full-day event. Over the last three years, a presentation in the gym in the morning is followed by classroom activities about the Residential Schools and reconciliation.
- Last year half of our Grade 6 students participated in ECSD's Truth and Reconciliation Walk and shared their experience.
- The inclusion team researched the Jordan's principle to better support our FNMI students.
- Métis Week information was distributed to staff and grade levels determined how to celebrate in their classroom.
- Métis presentation incorporated in French Cultural week- students learned about literature and the Michif language. Our traditional "Cabane à sucre" now incorporates an Indigenous historical component such as the history of the Métis people, "les coureurs de bois" and the many uses of "la ceinture fleche"/ the sash.
- Indigenous representation during our Multicultural Day. Students presented, with pride, an artifact of their heritage to their class. Their presentation was prepared with the help of their parents for example, one student shared her first Pow Wow experience while in her traditional dress.



BLESSED OSCAR ROMERO CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

The REDress Project at Blessed Oscar Romero High School. In April 2016, red dresses were hung up in the school cafeteria to bring awareness of the gendered nature of violent crimes against women. These dresses along with images of Mufty Mathewson's 181 photos of red dresses showed honour to the 1,181 missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada. This powerful display sparked the interest of more than 60 students who signed up to learn more during flex sessions.

CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Corpus Christi began serving students in September of 2017. Staff and students participated in Orange Shirt day on Sept. 30. Morning announcements were used throughout the week for education as well as classroom video presentations by teachers. For Métis week, they had several activities. The Métis flag was raised on site on Monday, the Monday broadcast was "what is Métis week and why we celebrate it?" The Tuesday broadcast was "what does the symbol of the Métis flag represent?" On Wednesday the topic was "why is the sash so important and what was it used for?" Thursday and Friday Broadcasts provided background, history and Fun Facts about Métis Week.

Over the past two years since the opening of Corpus Christi, we continue to foster reconciliation. Our school fun day was comprised of Indigenous games and we also hosted the Rainbow Spirit Dancers for our whole school to enjoy. During Métis week and Indigenous Day we linked our Catholic faith with Indigenous beliefs and spirituality. This year for our living rosary, one decade of the rosary was recited in Cree.

- New French and English books with an Indigenous focus have been purchased for the library for all to use. Several books present an Aboriginal language and students have greatly enjoyed exploring another language and Heritage Sites. A student who had visited the Head-Smashed-in-Buffalo Jump shared his pictures in class.
- Indigenous Day is preceded with sessions for all students on drumming diverse Indigenous music, games, and a lesson on Indigenous art. The Indigenous Day's activities include a presentation by an elder, sharing of a few of our Indigenous family's homemade traditional bannock, the making and significance of talking sticks, dream catchers, beading and weaves. The lessons learned in previous years are then integrated into the curriculum: one example, in Grade 6, is the incorporation of the Indigenous Medicine Wheel for children to learn the importance of having balance in their own lives to maintain mental health. We will strive to include the exploration of new and various cultural lessons and experiences in the following years.
- Our Skip-a-Thon fundraiser this year will help in the purchase of multicultural artwork for the library of which Indigenous work will be included and in which we hope to make connections with communities in St. Albert where Frère Antoine first took his vows as a priest.

As we are dedicated to continuing to grow in our understanding, we are looking forward to our ATA's Indigenous Ways of Knowing Inservice next year.



JJ BOWLEN CATHOLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The work at JJ Bowlen has been quite diverse. Chayla Delorme, an Indigenous presenter, has attended our school to do a presentation on “Tipi Teachings” to a Grade 7 Social class. The presenter has been to our school in previous years to conduct a Smudging Ceremony to our students as well as a presentation on the Medicine Wheel. In previous years, our FNMI student group attended a “Macbeth” play with Cree actors and props at the Fringe Theatre. JJ Bowlen has an FNMI designate who supports the students in areas of attendance, school work/grades, and Grade 9 transition to high school. Students are given one-on-one discussion times with the designate two times per year. The FNMI leader attends PD sessions monthly and brings back information/student resources to be used in the classroom. The Treaty 6 Acknowledgement is read on Friday morning announcements and at staff meetings. Every classroom has posted the Treaty 6 Acknowledgement. Our school library has a section set up with Indigenous books and objects. Every flex Thursday, at least one block out of three is dedicated to an Indigenous component by the FNMI designate. This school year the sessions were as follows: Talking Sticks, Turtle Teachings, Lady Slipper/moccasin making, AB Stories, Métis Literature, Flag Pins, Flower Beadwork, Bannock Making, Spirit Animals Rocks, Pebble Meditation, Solomon's Tree, Maverick's Finding Heart, Residential Schools, Blanket Exercise, Mask-making, Indigenous Veterans. And finally, “A Secret Path” by Gord Downie has been introduced during flex sessions. Following the reading/ lyrics, a conversation on residential schooling and its effects have followed.

“ As FNMI liaison at JJ Bowlen, it is my responsibility to assist in opening up the conversation of Residential Schooling. By offering the above activities, we are trying to involve all staff and students in the Truth and Reconciliation process. It is a challenge for all of us, as the events which occurred are just coming to light; therefore, it is important that we create activities and sessions that will allow for this open conversation to happen. ”

ESCUELA JOHN PAUL I
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Multiculturalism is truly a living, dynamic and spiritual experience at Escuela John Paul I. This has naturally, and most importantly, opened our eyes to the commitment we need to maintain in order to ensure that we honour, learn from and work alongside our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community members.

Our journey at JPI began with the realization that all members of our school community needed to recognize that we are all treaty people and that we all have a responsibility to heed the TRC calls to action as best we can. Students have discussed the 'why' of the treaty acknowledgment in their classes and are called to reflect on it weekly.

Orange Shirt Day was an excellent means of initiating conversation with our students – at their level – as to the history of residential schools and part of the 'how' of losing language and culture. Our students' hearts and spirits were touched and the pictures and messages they produced were on display for a week at the end of September.

We have endeavoured to provide a number of activities that would provoke continual learning for both staff and students such as, Métis Week activities, the making of a traditional drum to donate to Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples and this year, attending the Edmonton Indigenous Peoples Festival.

Our students have naturally journeyed on this path towards reconciliation with empathy, love, open minds, trust and faith. We continue to strive to give a safe space and a voice to our Indigenous students to also share the knowledge and gifts of their culture. We know that while the journey towards truth and reconciliation can be difficult, having our Indigenous Learning Services department as support, helps us facilitate the process of learning and understanding.



**LOUIS ST. LAURENT
CATHOLIC JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Louis St. Laurent is home to a variety of multicultural students including FNMI cultures. With such diversity, Principal Wasylenko recognized that many students were not able to find a “home” in the school. Modeling after the TRC, students were given a voice at staff meetings and in-service days. Students were invited to offer their schooling story and share how different procedures, activities and expectations impacted their ability to succeed at school.

The Blanket Exercise provided a platform for many of the Indigenous voices to be heard. The emotional session was powerful due to the fact that their students were leading and sharing the story. As follow-up from this heart exercise, teachers were encouraged to choose one student who they would purposely seek out to ensure they felt at home in the school. The difference in the number of suspensions and expulsions during the school year was remarkable. Mercy was not only defined, but also acted upon accordingly.

**MOTHER MARGARET MARY
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

At Mother Margaret Mary High School, we nurture the mind and the heart through our Changemaker activities. In our Teacher Advisories, students come up with social justice projects that will impact their community. As a team, they complete their Changemaker activity. Some projects have included a Red Dress Project, which created a visual representation of the Indigenous women who have gone missing and a clothing drive to help Indigenous people who are homeless. It is incredibly powerful to watch our students and staff come together to recognize the impact that a team of dedicated individuals can have in their own community.



At Our Lady of Peace School we honour reconciliation and celebrate Indigenous culture daily through a variety of learning and cultural activities.

SMUDGE & PROTOCOL TEACHINGS: We start the year with a smudge for staff and any classrooms that would like to cleanse the space to welcome a new school year. A smudge is offered before any ceremonies and daily, as needed for any students, staff or families. With continuous gratitude we share the Treaty 6 land acknowledgement to welcome families to celebrations and gatherings at our school. The land acknowledgment is also shared at the beginning of our Action News broadcast and within individual classrooms. Throughout the year our students have many opportunities to respectfully participate in a variety of ceremonies such as a pipe ceremony, mini round dance, Métis flag rising and various Pow Wow, drumming and dance opportunities. At the end of the school year we offer a smudge to send the students off with protection and in good spirits.

CULTURAL TEACHING: Beginning in September, there are many cultural teachings facilitated by our Braided Journeys Facilitator. These teachings include learning about medicines, making bannock, beading, Tipi teachings, Métis artwork and Indigenous games. Teachers and students can access these teachings at any time throughout the year.

ORANGE SHIRT DAY – EVERY CHILD MATTERS: During the last week of September, we recognize Reconciliation Week with activities throughout the school and community. During this week we highlight residential schools survivors and the history of 100 years lost. Our Braided Journeys Leadership group shares prayers during morning announcements and visits each classroom to share the history, the impact on generations and pray together for reconciliation. Students each prepare an orange shirt to share the message that Every Child Matters. These shirts are hung on the tree at the front of our school and around the school yard, for our community to see. At the end of the week, our students and many family members attend the Orange Shirt Day activities at City Hall.

BOOK OF THE MONTH AND INDIGENOUS LITERACY BACKPACK PROJECT: Each month our school chooses a focus Indigenous Picture Book that is passed around through each class from 100 Voices through Grade 6. Some of the titles from this year have been I Am Not a Number, The Legend of the Dreamcatcher, Dot in the Snow and The Red Sash. We also

created Indigenous Literacy Backpacks, which was a project proposed by our Learning Coach. These backpacks feature two Indigenous themed story books with activities for families to do at home. The backpacks were sent home with our Kindergarten students and returned after six days. Each week the students took home a different backpack, giving our students and their families an opportunity to read a variety of books paired with family activities.

ORAL STORYTELLING: Throughout the year we invite Elders and community members into our school to share their oral stories. There are special guests who joined us during Read-In Week in October and again in January. Throughout the month of January, our school has a literacy focus of Oral Storytelling as the winter months would traditionally be a time when stories were shared during the long nights in the tipi and lodges. We welcomed Gooda from the Northwest Territories to teach us more about the Inuit culture and share her gift of oral storytelling.

TEA AND BANNOCK NIGHTS: We welcome our families to our school during Meet the Teacher, through the Christmas season and in the spring with a Tea & Bannock celebration. These evenings allow an opportunity to gather together as a community, share food and drink together to strengthen our relationship for a strong foundation for the students at Our Lady of Peace. Families can learn more about the various clubs and programs offered at the school. These evenings are lead by an Elder from the ECS Council of Elders. There are also various guest presenters such as Adrian Lachance, Aaron Zor-thian, Amanda Lamonthé, Rocky Morin, Gary Gagnon, ILS Consultants Erin Reid and Sandra Sharpe, Rainbow Spirit Dance Troupe and the Edmonton Public Library.

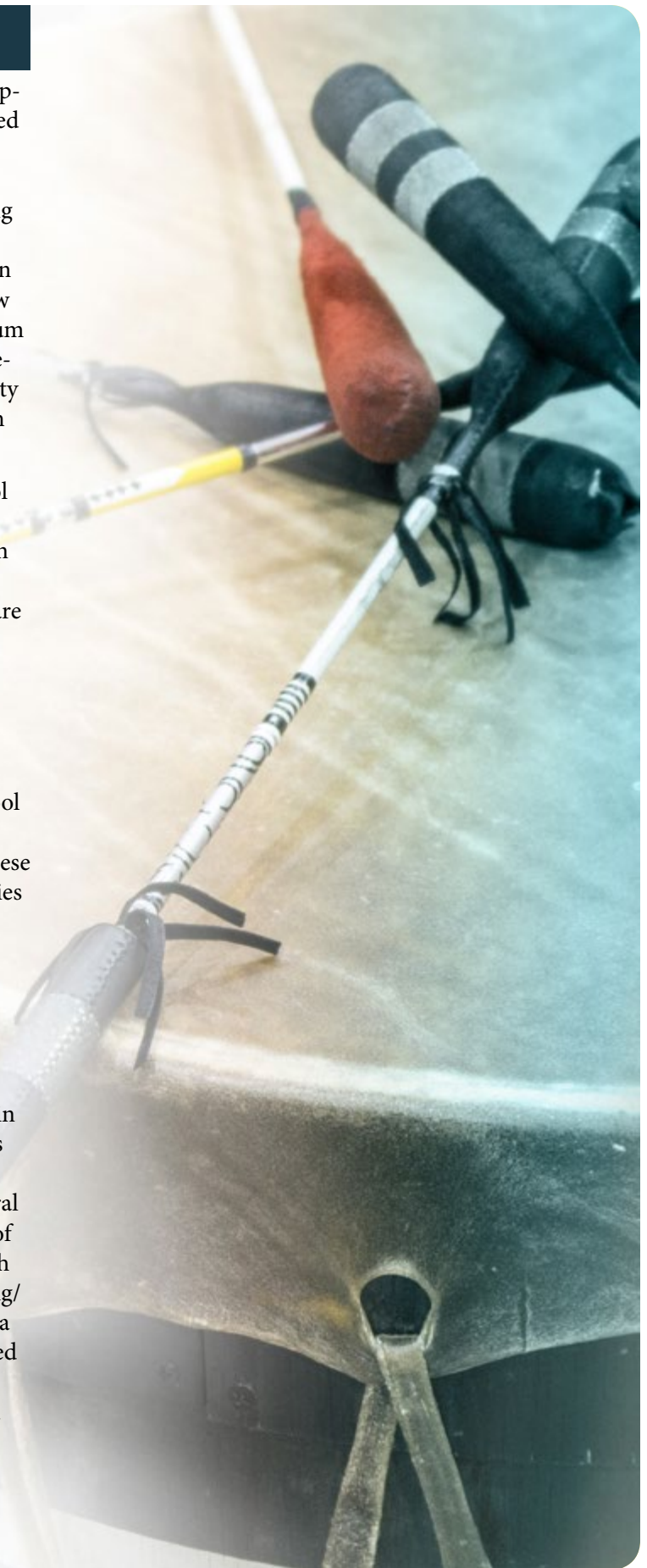
MÉTIS WEEK: In November we celebrate Métis week with Métis flag teachings, Métis flower people artwork, bannock making, bead work, sash teachings, Métis facts, stories and jigging. Students have enjoyed watching jigging performances and participating in “learning to jig” lessons. That week our students celebrated a “Wear your Sash” theme day. A few of our students taught the staff and students the Red River Jig dance and the broom dance. Classrooms listen to Métis violin and jigging music and watch a video about Rupert’s Land for students to learn more about the history.

CEREMONIAL DRUMMING: Every Friday, from September to June, Indigenous Learning Services supported the students in learning three ceremonial hand drum songs – Rock Your World, Holding You and Treaty 6 Flag Ceremonial Song. They also learned an Honouring drum song which was performed for Senator Murray Sinclair at the TRC training at O’Leary High School. In addition, the students learned how to play on a big Pow Wow drum. Our Cree students learned to sing and drum The Morning Song for the Annual Cree Language Celebration. They have also performed at many schools, City Hall and the Ben Calf Robe Pow Wow, drumming with Mr. Zorthian and his community drum group.

POW WOW DANCE: We held a 12-week, after school dance group facilitated by ILS and Braided Journeys. Students from a variety of cultures participated to learn more about the traditions, protocol and styles of Pow Wow dancing. Our dancers had the opportunity to share their dance talents at several ECSD schools, City Hall, Celebration of the Arts, the Ben Calf Robe Pow Wow, National Indigenous Peoples Day Celebrations and taught lessons to classes in our school.

PRINCESSES AND AMBASSADOR: Each year we select students who have shown leadership in our school community, by recognizing them as the Our Lady of Peace Princess, Ambassador and Tiny Tot Princess. These students represent our school at various pipe ceremonies and Pow Wows.

SEVEN SACRED GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS: This year one of school’s focus books was “Seven Sacred Teachings” by David Bouchard and Dr. Joseph Martin. We looked at each of the 7 Sacred Teachings (love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth) and were they could also be found in the Bible, in Gospel readings and parables. The traditional concepts of respect and sharing that form the foundation of the Indigenous way of life are built around the seven natural laws, or sacred teachings. Each teaching honours one of the basic virtues intrinsic to a full and healthy life. Each month and a half our students focus on a Bible teaching/ Sacred teaching. At the end of the month we celebrate a few children from each classroom who have exemplified that virtue. Families were invited to join us for the celebrations and enjoyed the connectedness of the Sacred Teachings and Catholic Virtues.



In the School of Alternative Education both staff and students endeavour each day to create meaningful relationships with each other. The Principles of Reconciliation form a guiding beacon in relationship building in which we all strive for together. The two notes that speak to us and have shaped all that we do are as follows:

Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.

All Canadians as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually **respectful** relationships.

Through staff development, goal setting and providing meaningful activities for our students, we believe we can walk together towards a more positive future of understanding and reconciliation for all Indigenous families.

At the School of Alternative Education, our Indigenous liaison team has representatives from school programming across Edmonton. We actively practice the spirit of openness, respect and inclusion. We feel it is our responsibility to create and maintain meaningful relationships with our students and families. We practice the spirit of open invitation and an attitude to keep the door open and to welcome our Indigenous students whenever they are in their path.

We are blessed to have the expertise on staff to support and guide our staff and students in this journey. Their expertise and connection to the Indigenous world helps to build a positive relationship between all people. This supports all sites in the planning and delivery of meaningful Indigenous programming for all our students. We are proud to have a Braided Journeys Grad Coach, Our Lady Of Grace Coordinator, and a School Team Advisor for Youth (STAY) member on our Indigenous liaison team.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES: We work to promote cultural awareness and diversity at all our sites. Major activities are centred at each site in a six week rotation around the city. These activities are designed to be inclusive in nature to achieve cultural awareness and relationships built around inclusion. To this end, having Elders come and share their teachings with our students has been a very powerful way of sharing the journey of Reconciliation.

Examples include:

- **Elder Tony Arcand**
 - teachings and discussion of his family's experience with residential schools
- **Elder Gilman Cardinal**
 - teachings on the rite of passage
- **Elder Rebecca Martel**
- **Elder Moostoos**
 - teachings on Turtle Island and First Contact
- **Goota Desmarais**
 - Inuit culture and teachings along with her own family's experiences with the Inuit relocations and the difficulties within those communities
- **Reuben Quinn**
 - teachings on the relationship of the Nehiyaw language and cultural identity

We took students to see the documentary "Elder in the Making" and meet the filmmakers – a Treaty 7 road trip documentary of reconciliation. We begin each school year with a School Opening Pipe Ceremony for all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to be able to participate in.

Our students and staff participate in Orange Shirt Day. We honour Orange Shirt Day by staff wearing orange, encouraging students to wear orange, and holding an activity with all students present that day. We have watched the locally developed film "Journey Toward Reconciliation" with our students.

We participate in a Spring and Fall Sweat Ceremony. This year it was combined with staff and students from Archbishop O'Leary. Many of the students knew each other and were closely related. The spirit of friendship and togetherness was clear that day.

The Musée Héritage Museum has come out to talk to our students about the unique history of the Métis people in Alberta and teach finger-weaving.

Students from Fresh Start engaged in nine learning sessions and three student led Call to Action sessions from the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights pilot program on Reconciliation in Schools. The students explored Indigenous identity and reconciliation from a rights based lens. Local Elders and community members were invited to share their lived experience and knowledge on a variety of important topics such as Indigenous Language, Worldview and Treaty. We explored our shared history through the Blanket Exercise and created a set of Calls to Action to advance reconciliation in our

communities. Staff and students participation in Indigenous Peoples Day last June.

Our staff have helped support the Millwoods Wahkohtowin Night that is organized by the Millwoods First Nation, Métis and Inuit Interagency Group. This local family event celebrates Indigenous culture and helps students learn new skills, share gifts and strengthen the community between everyone who calls Millwoods home. We encourage and support our students to attend career building opportunities. Two of the most successful have been the Oskayak Police Youth Academy, Bold Eagle and Indigenous Health Day. Here our students prepare for a transition into possible career choices.

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

We encourage and celebrate staff engagement in professional development. In this way staff have shown a desire to learn about Indigenous culture. This gives a sense of credibility and respect in the eyes of Indigenous students and parents. Some examples include:

- ILS Professional Learning Sessions
- ERLC – Amiskwaciy History Series (EPL)
- CASS – First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Gathering
- Traditional Games teachings staff development hosted at the YMCA

SYMBOLISM AND STUDY AT EACH SITE - CREATION OF A CULTURAL SPACE:

Each of our sites have a cultural space where students can meet with the Elders or go and smudge if needed. At each site great care is taken to visually display Indigenous iconography, color, and symbols that represent teachings from Indigenous culture.

- Each site maintains an Indigenous bulletin board that advertises events in the community (as well as camps and scholarship opportunities for Indigenous youth)
- Our sites encourage all students to study Indigenous Studies 10/20/30 to learn more about the history and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Included in this is an examination of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
- Smudging medicine is present at each site.

Curriculum resources, art work and Indigenous symbols to improve the overall look of the sites to better reflect the Indigenous heritage of our students.



The staff of St. Angela offer the following reflections on the work that they do as a whole and with their individual classes:

BLANKET EXERCISE: the teaching staff of St. Angela School, with the support of Indigenous Learning Services of ECSD, were completely enthralled by the Blanket Exercise during one of our Thursday afternoon PD sessions. By far, the most resounding response from teachers came in the form of emotions of sadness and compassion. Many were completely unaware of the situations with Canadian Indigenous Peoples. This new-found awareness is creating excellent professional dialogue and a renewed desire to ensure lesson plans and student learning is enhanced with the Indigenous Stories of our country. Thank you, Indigenous Learning Services, for the Blanket Exercise. It is truly an experience all Canadians should have. We would highly recommend this experience for all Canadians.

DEATH OF GORD DOWNIE: we discussed Gord's fight to bring awareness of the plight of the northern reserves and the ramifications of the residential schools for Indigenous children.

SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT: we collected cereal for the breakfast program at Ben Calf Robe - St. Clare School.

COLLECTIVE RIGHTS: We have been discussing collective rights for Indigenous people in social studies (i.e. treaties, reserves, unique identity, history).

ORANGE SHIRT DAY: we discussed the issue and history of residential schooling for the Indigenous people. We researched the story of Chanie Wenjack and Gord Downie's work with this. We also brought in Gord Downie's book *Secret Path* to share with the students.

JIM HIGGS: member of Edmonton's Historical Society, delivering a program called "Beavers, Beads and Pemmican" and speaking to students using the excellent resource, "The Fur Trade." His presentation highlighted the inequity faced by the Indigenous peoples post contact.

GRADE FOUR SOCIAL STUDIES: Treaties 6, 7 and 8 have been a focus since the teacher attended in-service about the Treaties.

ART: The class has previously fashioned a beautiful dreamcatcher. They will be doing this again this year.

CELEBRATING THE CULTURE OF STUDENTS IN CLASSROOMS: We celebrate the culture of students in class who are of Métis and First Nations heritage by having them share their stories and enriching class discussions.

WHEN I WAS EIGHT: teaching resource used to teach students about Residential Schools on Orange Shirt Day. *When I was Eight by Margaret Pokiak-Fenton:* Olemaun is eight and knows a lot of things. But she does not know how to read. Ignoring her father's warnings, she travels far from her Arctic home to the outsiders' school to learn. Based on the true story of Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, and complemented by stunning illustrations, *When I Was Eight* makes the bestselling *Fatty Legs* accessible to younger readers. Now they, too, can meet this remarkable girl who reminds us what power we hold when we can read.

BOOK: *Shin-chi's Canoe:* This book was used to explain to the Grade 6 students what residential schools were.

BOOK PURCHASING: every year our school reviews the books we have available for students, and we enhance our Indigenous story-based books with more books for our students to read. Some examples: *When I Was Eight* (Christy Jordan-Fenton); *Not My Girl* (Christy Jordan-Fenton); *Shi Shi Etoko* by Nicola Campbell.

ORANGE SHIRT DAY AND BOOK: The Grade 2 class of students talked about the history behind Orange Shirt Day and residential schools. They read the story *When I was Eight* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton. Each child made a statement about how they can show others they matter (on a cut out of their hand in orange, or on an orange coloured t-shirt).

We have a St. Augustine Day each year where we explore the Indigenous culture through dance, storytelling, activities and art.

We participate in Orange Shirt Day by sharing what residential schools were, how they impacted those who went there as well as their families and how they are still having an impact today and for many generations to come.

The staff, along with the guidance of an ILS consultant, worked through the Blanket Exercise so we could learn about the treatment of Indigenous peoples historically. We have and continue to use the Indigenous educational kits from Indigenous Learning Services to facilitate our teaching.

We have the statement from the government apologizing for Residential Schools, displayed in our front entrance. The reconciliation stained glass is displayed in the window of our library and we display our Treaty 6 flag at the front of our school.

Lesson plans for each subject and grade, celebrating Métis week, were distributed to all classroom teachers to implement as they saw fit. Literature with an Indigenous focus was purchased for the school library for everyone to use.

Staff and students have and continue to engage in meaningful activities. These have brought about awareness, understanding and learning for all, about Indigenous peoples, the history of Canada and residential schools and their ongoing impact today.



PIPE CEREMONY: Our Assistant Principal attended a Pipe Ceremony to ask prayers for the students, staff and community of St. Benedict to have a successful year.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Staff participated in a PD titled Indigenous Ways of Knowing. This was an overview of the histories and cultures of Indigenous peoples of this land and it included some interactive activities. We also explored the resource Learning Pebbles. We completed the activities for “Intergenerational Trauma, Stress and Development.” We also completed a historical timeline and examined attitudes and stereotypes.

As a staff, we also participated in the PD Holy Smoke. Smudging is used as a way of honouring the Creator God, as a sign of prayers rising to God.

We also hosted Traditional Plants and Medicinal Purposes. The presenter shared nature-inspired Indigenous teachings rooted in the sacred plants of the Medicine Wheel. All participants prepared their own combination of dried plants for purposes of their own healing needs.

Several staff members completed the modules for Indigenous Canada through the University of Alberta. This online course explored key issues facing Indigenous people today from a historical and critical perspective highlighting national and local Indigenous-settler relations.

LITERACY SUPPORT: Our literacy plan at St. Benedict School consists of a school-wide literacy block for “Guided Reading.” We were very fortunate to offer reading support to students using a variety of levelled Indigenous literature.

SOCIAL JUSTICE: The Grade 6 students completed a Social Justice Project to raise money for Sign of Hope. Over 60 students used their recesses to create Jingle Cones. They were symbols of prayer and healing. They were sold by the students who raised \$883.43.

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP CIRCLE: A group of boys in Grade 6 participated in weekly Leadership Circle. This included Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Staff from ILS worked with the boys to help instill leadership skills and to teach them drumming and singing.

SACRED SPACE: We created a Sacred Space this school year. This room serves as a gathering place for our school community to pray, reflect, celebrate and learn. The displays in the space demonstrate how beautifully Indigenous spirituality and Catholicity are interwoven. The Sacred Space has been used for Leadership Circle,

Rosary Club, sharing circles and other classroom lessons and activities.

SCHOOL-WIDE EVENTS: For Orange Shirt Day and Métis Week, teachers completed activities with their students in class. During Métis Week, staff from ILS shared a lesson for the Métis Octopus Bag in one of our classes.

Our Music teacher collaborated with an ILS consultant to find Cree songs and gather Cree translations for celebrations and our christmas concert.

CREE LANGUAGE CLUB: We started a Cree Language Club this year that we offered after school. We had 55 Indigenous and non-Indigenous children sign up. They were so eager to learn a second language within a Cree cultural context.

DRUMMING PRESENTATIONS: Staff from ILS worked with our Grades 3-6 students by doing drum teachings in the classrooms. The boys had the opportunity to play the hand drums and the girls had the opportunity to play the rattle.

OSCAR ROMERO READING BUDDIES: High school students from the Braided Journeys Program at Oscar Romero School worked with our Indigenous students in Grades 2 and 3. They served as reading buddies and then played together at recess. This helped our students to improve their reading skills and to connect with older students who served as positive role models for them. The high school students developed leadership skills through this initiative.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: The Grade 1 and Grade 4 classes had an in-school workshop on Inuit soapstone carving. The students learned that the Inuit carved tools, weapons, along with art objects from bone, ivory and wood. The children learned about the connection to the land. Ancestors of today’s Inuit carve birds, bears and other land and sea mammals, human figures and masks.

One of our classes read the book Fatty Legs by Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and Christy Jordan-Fenton. The story presents a memoir of young Margaret’s experiences at a northern residential schools. The story allowed for deep conversation amongst the students as they explored empathy for the children who experienced the residential schools system.

The Grade 6 classes, during their study of the Iroquois Confederacy, made wampum belts. Their task was to express their identity through beaded symbolism on the wampum.

Our Kindergarten class studied PEACE by exploring various literature. The Cree word miyo wihcetowin means PEACE and was proudly displayed on the bulletin board amongst all the other diverse cultural words for PEACE.

ST. BENEDICT INDIGENOUS DAYS: From June 18-20 we celebrated St. Benedict Indigenous Days. We explored topics such as: How to Love Each Other, smudging, Indigenous literature, moccasins, Métis jigging and traditional games. Elder Joe Ground opened our Indigenous Days with prayer over our Morning Broadcast. We also had a teacher from Kitaskinaw School, Enoch First Nation, bring a group of students, who taught our Grade 5 classes how to play traditional games, and the Kitaskinaw School Student Drummers performed for the entire school!

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY: For National Indigenous Peoples Day, we ate bannock with butter and jam, along with dried berries for our school-wide snack. Jeannie Letendre from ILS prepared the bannock for us and Donna Stelte and Tina Letki, EAs, served the bannock and berries to the students. This was a great opportunity to gather as a family, break bread together and share in a traditional food of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Many teachers read the book *Awasis* and the *World-Famous Bannock* by Dallas Hunt & Amanda Strong to their children. Other teachers shared Indigenous literature from a display collection that our librarian prepared for us.

GRADE 6 FAREWELL: As part of our Grade 6 Farewell Celebration, a student's mooshum honoured the entire group of students with a Drum Honour Song to congratulate them on their achievement and to wish them success as they move on to broaden their horizons in junior high school.



ST. CHARLES CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

St. Charles has always promoted cultural awareness. Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been formed we have become more aware of the suffering that the Indigenous peoples have courageously overcome and the long lasting effects that they are continuing to endure. We have been confronted with the ignorance of our past and have opened our hearts and minds to understanding and supporting our Indigenous brothers and sisters through conversations and activities.

We began our journey to a better understanding by participating in the Blanket Exercise led by members of Indigenous Learning Services. As a staff we were able to reflect on the many injustices that Indigenous people experienced and empathize with how these experiences still affect them today. Many members of our staff were shocked and embarrassed at the thought that many of our ancestors committed these crimes against humanity and we were completely oblivious to it. It was a very emotional and thought provoking experience that generated rich discussion and reflection.

We saw the exceptional learning opportunity of the Blanket Exercise and ordered the kit from ILS for our Grade 5 and 6 students to experience. The result was profound. Through discussion, students and teachers showed a great deal of empathy for the Indigenous people and acknowledged the courage and strength that the community exhibits. Many of the students shared their experience with family and friends and some students came back with stories and connections of how residential schools have impacted their own families.

In order to show respect and gratitude to the founders of the land we live on we proclaim Treaty 6 at the beginning of each staff meeting, school advisory meeting and school broadcast. This acknowledgement allows us to reflect on the history of land we call home. It helps open up conversations about the past allowing the truth to unfold. This conversation has been enriched and supported by the additional Indigenous literature we have added to both our classroom and school libraries.

We have also focused on extending the Truth and Reconciliation process by including Indigenous learning experiences in our St. Charles Student Faith Day. Over the past couple of years students have participated in a drum circle with Elder Jerry Wood, heard the art of storytelling presented by Gary Gagnon and learned about St. Kateri, Regalia and Pow Wow dancing. These activities allow students to recognize the positive impact that the Indigenous people have had on our Canadian heritage. Students and staff were able to have a broadened appreciation for the many teachings and gifts that people of the Indigenous culture have shared with us.

Over the past two years the St. Charles School community has participated in Orange Shirt Day to show our solidarity with the Indigenous community. Through assemblies and activities we are able to reflect on the truth about residential schools and the impact they have had on many generations.

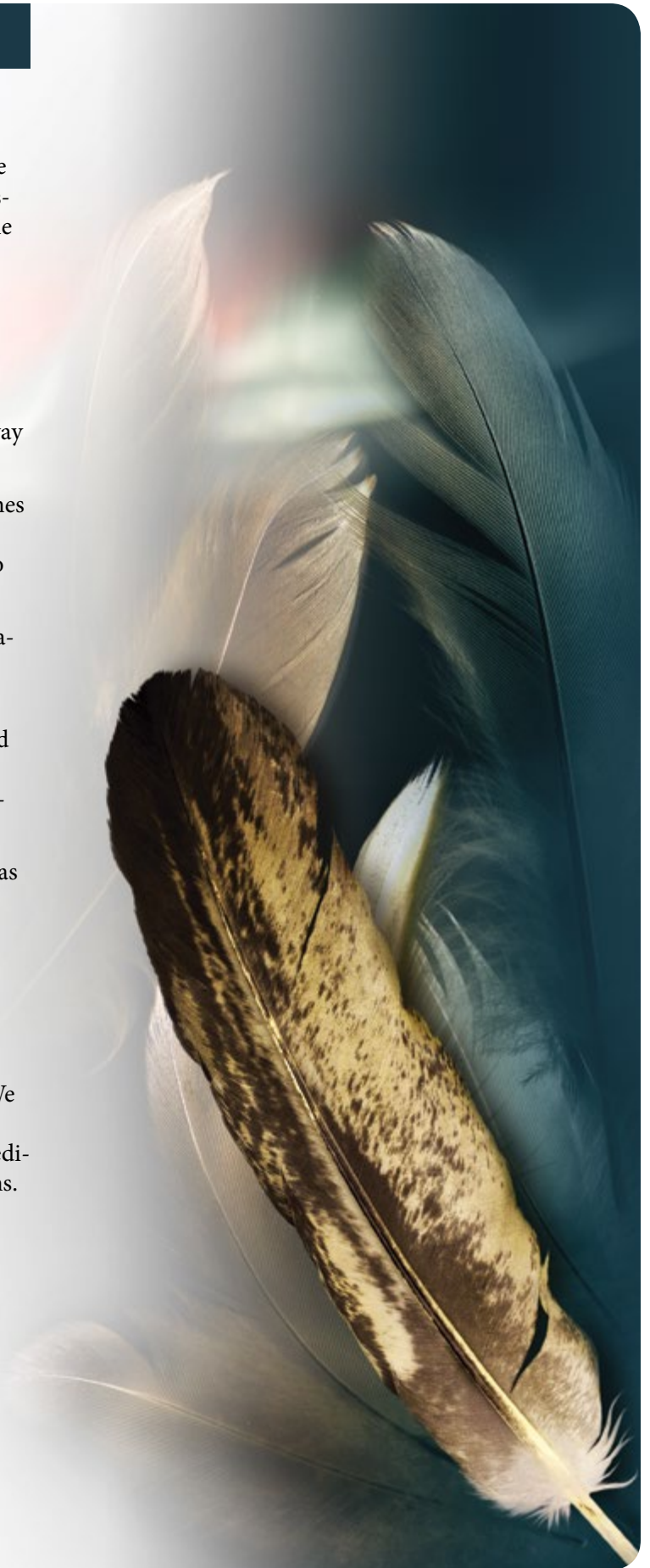
We recognize the prolonged trauma that enfranchisement, assimilation, residential schools and the Sixties Scoop has continued to cause for the Indigenous community and we are striving to promote and support healing. We are blessed with access to leaders of spiritual healing, through Indigenous Learning Services, who join our school on a regular basis to counsel Indigenous students who are struggling or in crisis.

We understand that this is the beginning of our journey towards Truth and Reconciliation. Reconciliation begins with truth; acknowledging the devastating events of our past and the enduring impact it has had on Indigenous people. Scripture reminds us that "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). At St. Charles School, we are striving to fulfill our call to act righteously in order to communicate the truth and promote peace through reconciliation.



The learning in our schools is diverse according to the work of each grade level and of our staff.

- The Grade 7 classes experienced the Blanket Exercise from Indigenous Learning Services. The students discovered the effects of European colonization from the perspective of our Indigenous people.
- The Grade 5 classes prepared for PYP exhibition by learning about various Indigenous people and inquiring about our own identities as a part of their discoveries.
- The Grade 6 classes read books like Fatty Legs as a way to experience stories about the residential schools.
- Students in Grade 8 demonstrated activities and games that are from Indigenous cultures. Not only do students learn about lacrosse and snowshoeing, but also versions of Dene and Inuit games are introduced.
- The Grade 9 classes learned about the numbered treaties as historical and cultural documents and how they've impacted our society.
- In Grade 3, the students learned about structures and habitats as a part of their science unit. The students have been building mikiwahp or tipis online and discussing the function and form of these structures.
- Our staff is developing our foundational knowledge as expected by the Alberta Teachers' Association.
- We have also carried out several activities as a whole school. Our school has participated in Orange Shirt Day as a way to remember those who were affected by the residential schools. We also had flex sessions using Edukits provided by Indigenous Learning Services to help guide us through Indigenous culture. We acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory on a daily basis in our announcements. We have a wall dedicated to celebrating Indigenous culture and traditions.



ST. EDMUND CATHOLIC
ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

At St. Edmund school, one of our focuses this year was getting to know our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and their interests so we could start planning and implementing experiences that educate and celebrate the Indigenous culture. We discovered quickly that there was lots of interest among students to know more about the first peoples who lived on this land we call home. We began this journey by bringing attention to the history of residential schools to all our students in Grades K – 9 through classroom presentations and activities. Our students also created posters and advertisements on daily announcements to promote orange shirt day. This day opened up discussions between students and staff and prompted the planning, organization and implementation of Indigenous learning classes. With student leadership help at the junior high level, we started planning and running Indigenous classes 2-4 times per week. They were well attended with high interest from students. Our first class started with staff and students sitting in a circle passing a talking stick and sharing their knowledge of their own Indigenous/Métis culture from what was passed on to them from friends and family.

Students shared some things they were interested in learning about. This started a journey of exploration and participation in many teachings and activities including: beading, drumming, story telling, totem poles, the medicine wheel, traditional games, various art, the importance of the eagle feather, the 7 teachings and making tipis. We were fortunate to have an Elder from our school community who came to our Grade K,1,2,3 and 4 classes to explain cultural teachings and lead our students in a smudge ceremony. One of our students is blessed with amazing dancing talent and has dressed in his regalia and performed a traditional dance for his peers. He also participated at the Ben Calf Robe Pow Wow in the grass dance.

Our St. Edmund school family is so proud of him. We feel it is important to celebrate our First Nations, Métis and Inuit student successes and we will share one more teaching with bannock making. Building relationships has been the key to strengthening our Indigenous school community this year. We look forward to continuing this journey and building more connections next year.



ST. ELIZABETH SETON CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Six students from Seton competed in a video competition put on by Safe and Caring Schools and Alberta Culture and Tourism. Students were asked to create a documentary answering the question “What does reconciliation mean to me?”

The video selections were screened in front of a judging panel and audience and then the top three places were selected. The students from Seton took home First Place and a cash prize of \$200!! The students wrote, filmed, translated and recorded the video. They plan on using the cash to fund an initiative for the homeless, which they are very excited about.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

At St. Francis of Assisi, ReconcilACTION happens every day. ReconcilACTION is the act of putting reconciliation and healing relationships into all that we do every day. St. Francis of Assisi offers Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin Cree Language and Culture Programs. We are more than structured classes and scheduled activities. St. Francis of Assisi is a Leader In Me school. The Leader In Me philosophy meshes with Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin. We all strive to be the best we can and support those around us. St. Francis of Assisi is a Legacy School of the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Foundation Program. We strive to exhibit miyo-pimatisiwin daily. Miyo-pimatisiwin is living the good life, a life of balance and caring for one's community.

In our language and culture classes, we offer Traditional dance, Pow Wow drumming and hand drumming. All through sharing of traditional teachings and ways of being. Indigenous knowledge and wisdom are woven into learning activities across subject areas. The medicine wheel is integrated across subjects. We seek balance in our busy lives, in art as we envision the colours of the world and how each property of the wheel contributes to the beauty of creation. Indigenous knowledge-based activities take place in all classes. Inspired learning is demonstrated and displayed in all classrooms. The inuksuit in the school are symbols of guidance and community. They direct us to care for all who come into our school. Smudge, drum and dance are gifts from the Creator we share with all.

We are blessed to have Knowledge Keepers such as Lloyd Cardinal, Amanda Lamothe, Rhonda Paul and Aaron Zorthian join our community. They share their gifts and

talents with our students and staff. Aaron and Lloyd work with our boys sharing their knowledge of drum and song, a few girls have joined in to sing. Amanda shares her experience of dance and regalia with the girls. Rhonda demonstrates miyo-pimatisiwin as she works with students to increase their literacy skills. All our Knowledge Keepers model and follow traditional teachings and protocols. Engaging in traditional cultural activities, students come to understand their place in the world and take the knowledge into their classrooms.

Our school community and population are made up of peoples from across the globe who are embraced by our Indigenous communities. Boys from South Sudan have joined our local Nehiyaw boys to drum and sing at all school celebrations and special events. Our dance troupe is made up of Nehiyaw girls who are joined by their Canadian newcomer sisters. The Newcomer girls want to learn about the Jingle and Fancy shawl dances. Children from around the world learn and share the gift of smudging as they learn the teachings and protocols.

Weather permitting, students engage in traditional outdoor activities. Fall and spring are times for animal hide preparation; scraping fat and hair off deer, elk and buffalo hides, getting them ready for making drums and rattles. Indigenous games are part of our Physical Education program. During February we host a mini round dance at the school that is open to the parents and guests. This year, one of our Grade 1 teachers organized a visit from some Grade 1 and 4 students and their teachers from St. Albert. They attended and shared in a day of healing and celebration of life. While at St. Francis of Assisi, our St. Albert guests experienced smudging. Our drum crew and dancers shared their gifts and talents. A Grade 5 class invited their pen pals to come and experience some traditional teachings and a mini-round dance. Traditional teachings were also shared. Grade 3 hosted an Arctic Games day toward the end of February, introducing our students and staff to traditional Arctic games.

Before our spring break, a flex day was setup to share various extra-curricular learning activities we our students. Some of the experiences that day were world drumming, hand drumming and Pow Wow drumming. Sessions were structured for students who do not participate in the regular drumming programs. Students were introduced to the Cree calendar through the story Thirteen Moons on a Turtle's Back by Joseph Bruchac.

The gifts of our Nehiyaw traditions are shared with community members who attend our celebrations and events. At St. Francis of Assisi, it is not always the students and staff who share their gifts and talents; we have community

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

members share theirs as well. Our Thursday's helper group have made bannock and stew for sharing with the school and community as well as serving our school in various other ways.

All the drum and dance practices lead up to several performances in May. The Pow Wow drummers joined students from Ben Calf Robe/St. Clare, Our Lady of Peace and St. Joseph high school to perform at the Celebration of the Arts. Dancers from Ben Calf Robe/St. Clare, Our Lady of Peace and St. Francis of Assisi joined in as well, to provide a visually stunning cultural experience as the opening for the event. The troupe was invited to repeat their performance at the 39th Annual Ben Calf Robe Traditional Pow Wow. The combined group of students also made presentations at other schools during May. Towards the end of May, St. Francis of Assisi School hosted a blanket exercise for the teachers and staff from across the division. We were honoured to have Elder Tony Arcand as part of the facilitation team. In preparation for Father's Day, the Grade 2 students constructed mini inuksuit as symbols of the guidance that fathers provide their children and families. The end of May saw our tipi go up. It is used as an outdoor teaching space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous content.

June found our children and staff outside enjoying the natural coolness of the tipi. New hand drums and rattles were made at the school from hides that were prepared with the assistance of students. The hand drum group was honoured to record a song for the division's Reconciliation Week video. This year the students and staff took a break from organizing and hosting National Indigenous Peoples Day activities and attended the division organized National Indigenous Peoples Day event; the students and staff enjoyed all the activities.

Celebrations and events at St. Francis of Assisi are attended by proud parents and grandparents as well as members of the general public who wish to share in traditional activities. At St. Francis of Assisi, Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin is not a program but ways of knowing and being shared by all. Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin is reconcilACTION.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

As a staff professional learning activity, we participated in the Blanket Exercise. This activity challenged staff and their understanding of the history of Edmonton and surrounding area. Through the exploration of significant names to the area such as Anthony Henday, and the understanding of what it means to be in Treaty 6, staff gained a greater insight into the nature of the history of exploration of the Edmonton area. By having staff participate and fill symbolic Indigenous peoples' roles, it created a deeper sense of empathy and will help staff in their calling to teach and mentor our FNMI students.

ST. JOHN BOSCO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Our work began with an FNMI Resource share. Staff were briefed during the staff meeting on the resources available from ALS as well as the kits that can be used to support curriculum at each grade level. All available resources are posted in EDUstaff share for easy access throughout the year.

Staff and students participated in Orange Shirt day activities. The Grade 3 classes took the lead and shared some important facts over broadcast. The staff received grade appropriate resources to use as they saw fit within their classrooms. During our staff retreat, we all participated in a Blanket Exercise. This was a very moving experience.

We also held a Cultural Day in January. Throughout the afternoon staff and students participated in and made connections to St. John Bosco and our FNMI culture. Students in Grades K-5 rotated through various stations. Students in Grade 6 experienced the Blanket Exercise. Stations included Bannock Making, Historical Museum Artifacts and Activity, Métis – Beading Kit, Lady Slipper (Moccasins), Water project, Story of the drum, Pow Wow book and dancing, Traditional Games, Pebble Meditation (handful of quiet) and Yoga and Métis – Pointillism art.

Our St. Kateri story has been cultivated in our Indigenous roots. Kateri Tekakwitha is also known as “Lily of the Mohawks.” She is also recognized as the Patron Saint of the environment. Our school has worked to ensure that all students learn and celebrate all that Kateri is known for.

We have always shared who Kateri Tekakwitha was with the students and since October 2012, when Blessed Kateri was canonized and became Saint Kateri, our students’ knowledge has continued to grow. St. Kateri Day is in July, therefore, we celebrate her during the school year. Last year, we were fortunate to have Elder Leo, Sister Kateri, Religious Education and Indigenous Learning Services Consultants, an oblate father and Herman, a representative from a Mohawk tribe the United States of America, join us in the teachings and celebration of St. Kateri. We began with a Smudge Ceremony and the sharing of stories and songs in Cree with our guests. Next, some students and our guests worked together to honour our namesake in our Lily Garden. Before it was our Lily Garden, the outdoor space was underutilized and not well maintained. We began to transform it into an outdoor learning space for all students, a sacred space. A space within the garden was set aside to plants dozens of lilies. Our honoured guests prayed and offered tobacco to bless our garden. Together we planted the first seeds that have grown into a beautiful space to learn and grow in. Our Kindergarten students named it “The Lily Garden.”

Our Elders and Indigenous guests then moved into the Grade 1 classrooms to teach the students about the St. Kateri chaplet and prayers that accompany it. All grades then began constructing their St. Kateri chaplets and praying together. As well, our students worked with staff from Indigenous Learning Services who shared teachings on rocks and totem animals. Students learned about grandfather rocks and animals and how they have so much to teach us about the world and ourselves. After choosing their own totem animal to represent who they are or wanted to become, the students drew the totem on their rocks. Next, the students placed their totem rocks

into concrete forms to create slabs. The slabs formed the shape of the cross and the beginning of our Lily Garden St. Kateri Chaplet. The life-sized chaplet has grown across the garden as the central feature. A permanent reminder of the life of St. Kateri was created by the students’ own hands. The garden chaplet allows classes to go into the garden and pray the St. Kateri chaplet by walking among the stones that they have made. Because St. Kateri was also known for going through the woods as a young girl and placing crosses at the base of trees, the cross shape and life-sized chaplet carries a deeper connection for the students to their school’s namesake. Our week of learning about and celebrating St. Kateri culminated with some of our own Indigenous students performing a traditional dance for the school.

The Indigenous teacher liaisons at St. Kateri have worked to ensure that staff and students have a variety of learning opportunities and resources to access. Stories and discussions with all grade levels of students have occurred pertaining to Residential Schools and the repercussions they have had on our communities. All staff, as well as our Grade 5 and 6 students have participated in the Blanket Exercise. The reflections that were shared after the activity by both the staff and the students demonstrated the understanding and impact of the government actions. Another way that we have recognized these actions is through our school participation in Orange Shirt Day every September. Stories were shared beforehand over our morning broadcast to educate our students and bring awareness of the importance of equality. Our morning broadcasts have also been a way in which some of our Indigenous students have prayed in Cree.

We started off by imagining how we can bring to light the glory of God through the life of St. Kateri and we continue on our journey into many diverse cultures and teachings that ultimately teach us that kindness and mercy have the power to change the world. Staff and students learned more about St. Kateri, Indigenous cultures and each other, while physically changing our school environment in the process to celebrate our namesake.

**ST. MATTHEW
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Our school is taking many steps on the journey to Truth and Reconciliation.

ORANGE SHIRT DAY: As a school, students and staff were asked to wear an orange shirt to honour the story of a little girl who was not allowed to wear the orange shirt and had it taken away. As students and staff, we were able to reflect and honour her strength and how important it is to support and honour our diversity. This reflection helps us to know the importance of accepting our differences and our diverse backgrounds on this journey to reconciliation.

HOLODOMOR: This commemoration within the Ukrainian community and the school as a whole have helped us to honour not only the Ukrainians but our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. This year we created two stained glass windowpanes which hang in the front foyer of the school. It helps to show the journey our both the Ukrainians and First Nation, Métis and Inuit students as we both look for Truth and Reconciliation from what occurred and how lives were changed forever. By remembering and honouring the past, we know we will never lose faith, hold onto hope and trust in God.

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE:

We are continuing to look at ways to support our families and help them cope with some of the struggles they are experiencing. Understanding what they have experienced and learning how to communicate together will enable us to build that trust. It is extremely important to welcome our families into the school and have those conversations which create the sense of belonging.

ST. MATTHEW DAY: This year we looked at the book “What Do You Do with an Idea?” and how we could create an area that reflected and included everyone. We that in mind we created our own graffiti wall where every student and staff member placed their handprint to show that we are a school family and can work together to support one another. This is a daily reminder of who we are.



ST. PIUS X
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Staff of St. Pius X participated in the Blanket Exercise, lead by Erin Reid, during an in-school staff professional development session.
- Smudge teaching and teaching of an Offering protocol was shared with staff at an in-school professional development session.
- Individual Smudge teachings were offered to all class groupings, 100 Voices to Grade 6 by Aaron Zorthian.
- A parent of a Grade 4 student shared the teaching of Smudge and sacred medicines with the Grade 4A and Grade 4B classes.
- School-wide participation of Orange Shirt Day. The day began with a school-wide assembly, which was followed by the completion of individual class orange shirt posters.
- Designated time allotment at staff general meetings for the sharing of resources and general knowledge of our true Canadian history and its impact on Indigenous People.
- School-wide participation of National Indigenous Peoples Day.
- Indigenous students shared their gift of dance at school wide Multicultural Day.
- Indigenous families were invited to share their culture at school Multicultural Day.
- FNMI Lead Teacher chosen to attend Indigenous Learning Services professional development sessions.
- Development of a place of honour/respect for Indigenous culture in foyer.

The students and staff of St. Pius X Catholic School are continuing the journey of Truth and Reconciliation in honour of our Indigenous families and of all Indigenous peoples of Canada. We continue to celebrate the culture of the Indigenous People and learn about the true historical events that occurred in Canada. Staff has received information of the tragic historical events and of the suffering of Canada's Indigenous people, some of which is being heard for the first time for many staff. Students have also received age-appropriate information on the truth of residential schools and the suffering of the Indigenous peoples. As we continue along our path to reconciling tragic events of the past and move towards a healing of the future, we continue to reshape history. The support of this statement is clearly documented in the following words shared by one of the Indigenous Learning consultants during our staff professional development session:

And look at how far we have come along our journey. Here I am teaching a group of Catholic teachers about Smudge - something very sacred in our culture. (Please note that these are not the exact words used, but a close summary of the statement.)

A powerful statement of truth! When one stops to conceptualize the reality of this statement in the reflection of our past, we begin to feel that we are in the midst of change. This is the reward of increased knowledge and understanding within Truth and Reconciliation. This is why our teaching of the Indigenous people's past and the celebration of their culture is so crucial. This is the importance of educating and learning.



ST. RICHARD CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The students and staff of St. Richard School are developing their knowledge of Indigenous peoples ways of thinking, knowing, and being. Our school is comprised of many cultures from all over the world and we are eager to understand the culture and history of our First Peoples.

Our journey began with an Indigenous display of cultural artifacts, books, paintings and a Cree prayer in our learning commons. We placed a framed parchment copy of the federal government's apology to Canada's Indigenous people in a prominent location in our school for all to see. Students began daily announcements with the acknowledgement that we are on Treaty 6 land. We have enriched our library collection with new Indigenous books.

We have commemorated Orange Shirt Day from its inception, with a gathering and a glimpse back into history of how things once were for Indigenous children in school... Our students have watched the movie clip, *Shi-shi-etko*, and empathized with the little girl, as she anticipated going to school, but had to leave her family behind... They responded with an artistic representation, prayers and wishes for all children to have a wonderful and rewarding school experience,

St. Richard staff has participated in the Blanket Exercise and are seeking to learn more through the many resources available from our Division's Indigenous Learning Services, which they can use to support student learning in social studies, language arts, art and religion.

Students have listened to traditional stories and responded through art projects. In religion class, Grade 2 students have learned about St. Kateri – Lily of the Mohawks.

In our quest for knowledge, we have sought the support of Indigenous consultants. We play Indigenous games to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day and have developed our own Indigenous Games Edukit. This year, we plan to add more games to it.

New this year is our Cree Cub, where interested students of various cultures will receive Cree language instruction from a division specialist and have fun learning about culture and traditions through a variety of activities. Language learning opens up a whole new world....

As a new Green STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Academy, our lens for Indigenous learning will be our greening and STEM work. Students will research Indigenous plants in the area and seek the consultation of an elder, who is a specialist in plant life and traditional medicine. As environmentalists, we hope to grow a garden of Indigenous plants that were used by our First Nations peoples.

The beliefs of the Indigenous people are intertwined in the philosophy of our St. Richard Green STEM Academy. As stewards of the earth, we are inspired by the Indigenous people to value and respect the beautiful world given to us by God, the Creator.

We **know** that each successive year
will bring new **knowledge**.



**ST. ROSE
CATHOLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

St. Rose continues its three-year project to acknowledge the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Last year the school worked with Theodora Harasymiw, a local artist specializing in mosaics, to create four mosaics depicting the Indigenous culture. In February 2019, Ms. Harysymiw returned to work with students to create six images depicting the Métis culture. The installation of the mosaics was a cooperative effort among the artist, students and parent volunteers. The mosaics were dedicated in a ceremony on May 2nd. Representatives of the Métis Nation of Alberta, ECSD and the St. Rose School Council were in attendance.



**ÉCOLE ST. STANISLAUS
CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

In an effort to support Indigenous students, we have chosen to recognize, visually and vocally, the presence and importance of Canada's Indigenous peoples. Before each staff and school council meeting, we recognize that we are on the land of Treaty 6 by reading the Treaty 6 Acknowledgement. We have also posted the Treaty 6 Acknowledgement on the front doors of the school.

Last Spring, we purchased many reading resources from *Taanishi Books*, *Eaglecrest Books* and *Turtle Island* to increase the visibility of Indigenous cultures in our class libraries. It has offered teachers greater opportunities to discuss cultural traditions and values with our students.

In June, we celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day by introducing students to Canadian Indigenous art. This provides us with another opportunity to showcase the significant achievements and precious talents and skills of our First Nations. We have also included Indigenous games to our roster of Daily Physical Education activities.

Last Spring, we invited the Honourable Richard Feehan MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford and Minister of Indigenous Relations to speak to our school community. During his presentation, he explained the meaning of each symbol on the Confederacy of Treaty 6 flag. At the end of the presentation he gifted us with this flag which presently hangs in our front foyer next to our Alberta and Canadian flag. Students have often been seen revisiting the flag and having an unprompted conversation about its meaning.



ST. TIMOTHY CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At St. Timothy we celebrate diversity and cultural awareness. We recognize the importance of honouring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and helping our students to understand the experiences of those affected by residential schools. Moving forward means understanding the past.

Each year we honour the survivors of the residential schools system by participating in Orange Shirt Day. Students learn about little six-year old Phyllis and wear their orange shirts proudly in her honour. This year we purchased “The Orange Shirt Story” by Phyllis Webstad for teachers to share with their students in order to help them develop a deeper understanding of the importance of honouring Orange Shirt Day.

Last year we were thrilled to welcome Amanda Woodward-Lamothe at our St. Timothy Day Celebration where she spent time with each grade sharing stories about faith and Indigenous perspectives.

This year our Grade 6 students participated in several Indigenous art projects. They made Wampum Belts and participated in an art project where they learned how to draw the Native Eagle Symbol which is of great significance due to the eagle’s close relationship with the creator.

Our Grade 2 class learned about Ted Harrison, whose art was inspired by the land and people of the Yukon. They also participated in The Northern Birthday Box Project. The Northern Birthday Box Project is a group that helps match sponsors with a child from a northern or remote Canadian community who has an upcoming birthday to celebrate. Our Grade 2 class was matched with a student named Reesie from Pond Inlet Nunavut. The students researched and learned about the high costs of and difficulty accessing basic items in Canada’s north. They donated money and put together an amazing birthday box for Reesie. They learned about what she liked and worked hard to make her birthday box special. In addition, they learned about the hardships that persist in Canada’s north and the importance of working to ensure that all people have their basic needs met.

SISTER ANNATA BROCKMAN CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

We have several Indigenous-themed academic and social initiatives happening at Sister Annata Brockman. These initiatives are challenging the hearts and minds of our staff and students. Our students are learning the importance of providing opportunities for all to listen, share and understand the plight of the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Activities carried out this year have encouraged awareness of the impact history has had on Indigenous peoples of Canada and have created empathy and understanding.

KINDERGARTEN INDIGENOUS PROJECT:

Kindergarten students were involved in a discussion regarding our school days beginning with the Treaty 6 Acknowledgment.

Students discovered how the first Canadians used to live. The teacher highlighted aspects of Indigenous culture, traditions and the respect they had for land, animals and natural resources. The lesson continued by bringing awareness that many of us come from other countries which also have wonderful traditions. Family letters were sent home requesting students’ country of origin, their language and any special traditions still celebrated here in Canada. This lesson was to celebrate all backgrounds and ways of life, including Indigenous.

Literature was then introduced to keep the theme of Indigenous culture going. One story they read was about simple Cree words, including hello. They then displayed hello in many languages, but made a point of using the Cree version often. As well, many legends were shared from the past, as well as current literature, including stories based on residential schooling. The teacher incorporated a residential school video bringing to life respect for the culture of Indigenous peoples. Small tipis were purchased, and each child placed their hand print and name on them. This was used as a play center for well over a month and then raffled off. Kindergarten students then completed the entire project with a cultural snack and lunch activity which created a sense of connection and acceptance of all cultures.

GRADE 6: In September and October, students in Grade 6 read two poems a day from “Voices from the Wild” written by David Bouchard, an Indigenous author. The teacher spoke of the author and his personal story of dyslexia and his struggles through school. He had to work very hard, but he persevered and became a teacher, then principal, and author of many books that reflect Indigenous culture. His talent is creating and reciting thousands of lines of poetry from heart and he

is an inspiration to many Canadians. The students were inspired by his writing and ability to persevere through difficulties within his life.

GRADE 7 students were given the opportunity to explore the significance of cultural and natural identity of the Métis people. More specifically, students examined the effects of the sale of Rupert's Land and the short and long term effects of the Red River uprisings. Students also had the opportunity to explore the Métis mission to protect their language, religion and culture. By exploring concepts of language loss and culture, students began to understand the effects of being torn away from one's home, culture and language and how difficult this would be.

GRADE 8 students gained an understanding of concepts related to the Dene worldview. Through the story *The Legend of the Caribou Boy* ancestral knowledge and relationships to land were explored. By reading, sharing and understanding another's worldview, it created relationship amongst all students in the classroom. Discussing how others see the world helps us to be less ignorant of the world around us and helps us to be empathetic towards others.

GRADE 9 students deepened their understanding of Métis and non-status Indian collective rights. Students explored the impact of achieving status on Métis and non-status Indians and the evolving nature and restoring of relationship between the Canadian Government and Métis peoples. Grade 9 students also got the chance to consider the role of the Supreme Court of Canada in recognizing and protecting collective and individual rights by assessing the extent to which the court has successfully reconciled the collective and status rights of Métis and non-status Indians in Canada. In January, another Grade 9 Social Studies class will begin their unit on the Charter of Rights & Freedoms and Collective Rights. As part of that unit the students will complete a novel study on *7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga*, as well as a group Graffiti Art and Social Studies project challenging the students' hearts and minds by opening a door for rich discussion through the sharing of opinions and points of view from a new lens.



TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION ANNUAL WALK

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (“TRC”) report was released in 2015, an annual Reconciliation Walk has been held on the first Friday in June to honour and commemorate the historic chapter of Indigenous education within Canada. The Reconciliation Walk recognizes the 94 Calls to Action recommended in the TRC report and is a joint event with the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Public School Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools showcasing the curriculum outcomes projects and lessons of each school division as it pertains to the legacy of the Residential Schools.

“ One highlight for me occurs on the first Friday in June when we gather staff, elders and students from the City of Edmonton and both school districts and we go on a Reconciliation Walk. Escorted by police, we alternate walking from Sacred Heart to the Edmonton Public School Building and then, in turn, we walk to City Hall.

I especially enjoy walking side by side with my friend and mentor Elder Betty Letendre, our students and staff as we follow the Eagle Staff and the flags which is extremely symbolic. Upon our arrival at City Hall, Ms. Betty honours us with a blessing and the Mayor then addresses all of us and proclaims that day to be the City of Edmonton’s Reconciliation day. A plaque is then presented to representatives of both school districts. It is a beautiful and powerful event! ”

(Joe Naccarato, Assistant Superintendent)



Treaty Six

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of Treaty 6 and home of Métis Nation of Alberta Zone 4. We also acknowledge the Inuit and other diverse Indigenous peoples whose ancestors have marked this territory for centuries, a place that has welcomed many peoples from around the world to make their home here.

We, at Edmonton Catholic Schools, commit to restoring and honouring the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action; we strongly believe that truth must be acknowledged to move forward to reconciliation. Together we call upon all our collective communities to build a stronger understanding of all peoples who dwell on this land we call home.

WALKING TOGETHER IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST



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... LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS... (MATTHEW 5:16)



September 2019