

JOURNEY OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

IN



September 2018

“ 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 District’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 District 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 District.

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 District 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 District 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 District 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 on-going relationship based on support with the Board of Trustees and Superintendent;
- To provide cultural information to the District, staff and students;
- To foster a link between the Indigenous community and the Edmonton Catholic School District; 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 District.

“ *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.

INDIGENOUS LEARNING SERVICES

Indigenous students and families find a greater voice in Edmonton Catholic Schools through Indigenous Learning Services, which is housed in the 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 District. 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 60s 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 District 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 District 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 District, 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 District 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)

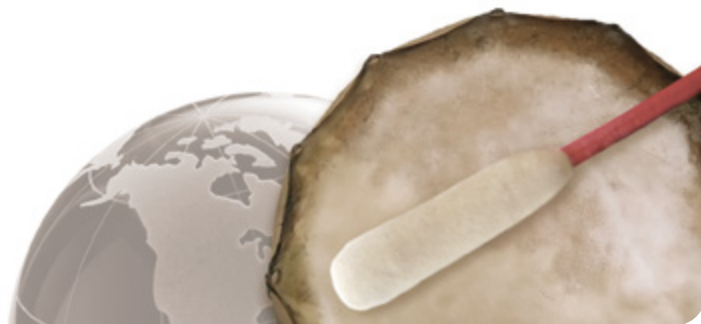
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT... *While researching the history of Canada's Indigenous people for her social studies classes, Maria (Grade 5 teacher) came across the documents of the TRC. At first, she had difficulty believing what she was learning the role that the Canadian Government played in downgrading 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 school 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. (TRC final Report, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>)

“ **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 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 District. 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 District 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 60s Scoop, or the breakdown of family and community.

For many in the District, 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, 60s 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 District 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 school. 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** school year.

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 9's
- 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

Grade 7, 8 and 9 students created an entry for the 2017 Alberta Rural Education Symposium Rural Art Showcase. With the help of their teachers, Elder Francis Alexis, Art Consultant P.J. Krumins and Joanne Ladouceur they journeyed to explore themes connected to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and residential schools. Their submission is a collaborative piece reflective of those themes.

This group project shows how students interpreted the teachings of Elder Francis and then put them together to show the losses and struggles endured by residential school students and the Indigenous community. But the images also show a spirit of strength, hope, love and rebuilding all within the traditional symbol of the medicine wheel.

The hope is that this work will inspire the spirit of reconciliation for the people of Edmonton, Alberta and Canada for many years to come.

These activities challenged our students and staff to reflect on difficult stories that had affected the Indigenous community. Students were also asked to consider what role reconciliation played in this process as they worked through activities involved with creating the piece of art.

A framed copy was given as a gift to the Mayor's Office at City Hall on June 2, 2017 as part of the Reconciliation in Education Event held there.



BISHOP GRESCHUK CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In December 2015, our two student teachers shared with our Grade 5 and 6 students and staff the first Blanket Exercise here at Bishop Greschuk School. The activity was so powerful in teaching the lessons of history that there were tears and many were speechless, as our hearts and minds opened to history, moving us toward truth and reconciliation. We have since brought in our Indigenous consultants to lead our students, and then in the spring, our entire staff with the Blanket Exercise; again, a very powerful and moving experience for all.

As well, for the past two years, we begin all our staff and school council meetings with the Treaty 6 Acknowledgement. During Friday broadcast, on BGTV, our students lead with the Treaty 6 Acknowledgement. Also, for two years, we have celebrated Orange Shirt Day in remembrance. We, at Bishop Greschuk School, understand that we need to teach these lessons of history to move us from head to heart in finding common ground.

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.





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.

JJ BOWLEN CATHOLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The work at JJ Bowlen has been quite diverse. The Blanket Exercise was shared with a Grade 7 class in 2016/2017 and will be offered to all grades in flex sessions moving forward. Chayla Delorme, an Indigenous presenter came in and offered a Smudging Ceremony to a large group of Grade 7 and 8 students as well as performed a Jingle Dance. She also came in to teach a Grade 7 class about the Medicine Wheel. Our FNMI student group attended the "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 are 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.

An educator from MacEwan University was brought in and conducted a presentation on Indigenous history. And finally, "A Secret Path" by Gord Downie will be introduced during a flex session. Following the reading/lyrics, a conversation on residential schooling and its effects will follow.

“ 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. **”**

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

Louis St. Laurent is home to a variety of multicultural students including the 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.

School of Alternative Education: 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 centered 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 families 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 Mill Woods Wahkohtowin Night that is organized by the Mill Woods 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 Mill Woods 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 afternoons 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. We discussed the socio-economic conditions for many of the students at this school as well as their needs.
- **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. I 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 of mine since I attended in-service about the Treaties. What an eye-opener that was for me.
- **ART:** my class has previously fashioned a beautiful dreamcatcher. We will be doing this again this year.
- **CELEBRATING THE CULTURE OF STUDENTS IN MY CLASSROOM:** We celebrate the culture of students in class who are of Métis and First Nations heritage by having them share their stories and enriching our 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*: In recent years I explained to my Grade 6 students what residential schools were. I used the book *Shin-chi's Canoe*.
- **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 Etko* by Nicola Campbell.
- **ORANGE SHIRT DAY & BOOK:** My Grade 2 class of students talked about the history behind Orange Shirt Day and residential schools. We 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).

ST. AUGUSTINE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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.



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 60s 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.



ST. CLEMENT CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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 are preparing 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 are reading books like Fatty Legs as a way to experience stories about the residential schools.
- Students in Grade 8 are demonstrating 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 are learning about the numbered treaties as historical and cultural documents and how they've impacted our society.
- In Grade 3, the students have been learning about structures and habitats as a part of their science unit. The students have been building mikiwahp or teepees online and discussing the function and form of these structures.
- Our staff is beginning to develop 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 Edu-kits 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. 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.

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 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. KATERI CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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 some 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 under-utilized 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

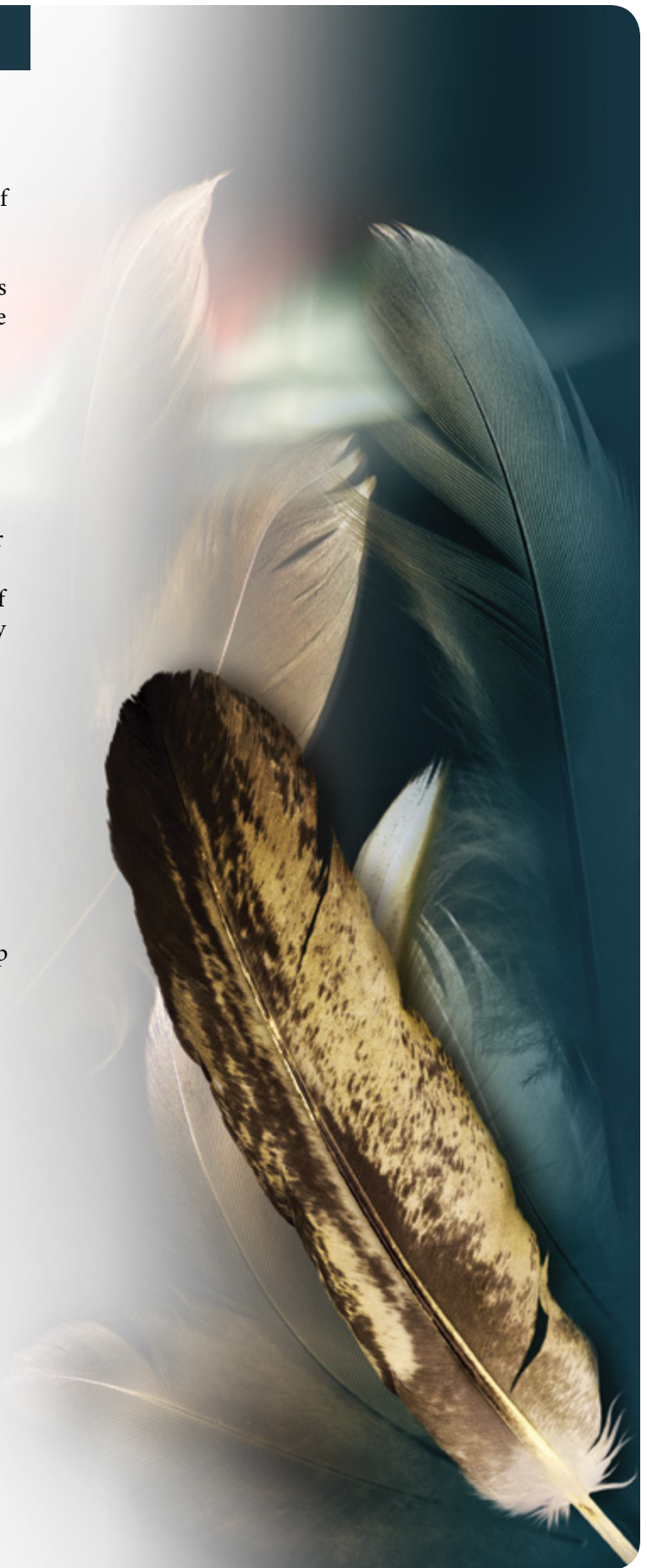
into concrete forms to create slabs. The slabs formed the shape of the cross and the beginning of our Lily Garden St. Kateri Chaplet. The life-sized chaplet has grown across the Garden as the central feature. A permanent reminder of the life of St. Kateri was created by the students' own hands. The Garden 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.

Our school is taking many steps on the journey to truth and reconciliation.

- **ORANGE SHIRT DAY:** As a school, students 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 heard the story, they found it hard to believe that this could actually happen to a child or in our current life time. It was a day of reflection and honouring her strength.
- **HOLODOMOR:** This is a commemoration within the Ukrainian community. When we were creating a cross using shattered pieces of glass, reminding the staff and students of the lives in Ukraine that were shattered, our thoughts immediately extended to our Indigenous families whose lives were also shattered and touched. Through putting the shattered pieces of glass on the cross we were able to, through the mercy and grace of God to make the cross whole again. With this we know we will never lose our faith, hold onto hope and trust in God. The cross hangs in our chapel and will honour both the Holodomor and Truth and Reconciliation.
- **BLANKET EXERCISE:** This is an activity that we have planned with our staff.
- **TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE:**
An Indigenous Crisis Worker will be presenting to our staff ways that we can assist our families and help them cope with some of the struggles that they are experiencing. "We are our brother's keeper."
- **TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT TEACHERS:** The Indigenous consultant will be meeting with our staff to present the new resources, as well as ways which we can introduce, teach and integrate Truth and Reconciliation, into our daily lessons.



The school community of St. Pius X has done much work in the realm of the TRC Calls to Action:

- All staff of St. Pius X participated in the Blanket Exercise during a school professional development day.
- Staff attended a professional development session at Sacred Heart. This session was led by Gary from Indigenous Learning Services. Gary shared information about the sacred grasses, medicines and rituals of the Indigenous peoples.
- FNMI Lead Teacher chosen to attend Indigenous Learning Services professional development sessions.
- Staff member selected to represent Edmonton Catholic Schools at the Alberta Education for Reconciliation Teachers' Resource Review Working Group.
- Métis Week celebrated through school wide workshops hosted by Indigenous Learning Services staff members.
- Karen Gagnon (Indigenous Learning Services) provided reading support to FNMI students, through the use of culturally relevant reading resources. Karen would come to the school twice a week and would provide literacy support to various groups of students. Karen also led the students in various cultural activities such as: bannock making, learning of Indigenous games, sharing knowledge of the Seven Sacred Teachings and dreamcatcher making.
- 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 in National Indigenous Peoples Day. All staff and students attended the National Indigenous Peoples Day events held at Victoria Park.
- Indigenous dance groups and drummers have shared their gifts of dance and music on several different occasions.

For the past several years staff and students at St. Pius X Catholic School have been gaining knowledge of the true historical events that occurred in Canada. These historical events have greatly impacted the first people who lived in this country – the Indigenous people. Students and staff have participated in a variety of cultural events celebrating the Indigenous culture. Staff has received information of the awful 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. Even though our journey on the path of Truth and Reconciliation began fairly recently, its impact on a new generation has already begun. The support of this statement is clearly documented in the following event of a Grade 4 student of St. Pius School:

“As the Grade 4 teacher was walking her students down to the music room, Fred, one of her students approached her with the question, “So is Rosie First Nations? She told me she was First Nations.” The teacher's reply was, “Yes she is First Nations, that is what she shared with us this morning.” (Side note: That morning the Grade 4 class had a great discussion about the Indigenous culture and Rosie was sharing that she was a jingle dancer). As Mr. Bret the music teacher came into the music room, Fred and I were still standing at the door. He turned to Mr. Bret and said, “Did you know Rosie is First Nations? She is soooo lucky!!!” (Please note: All names have been changed in this event)”

This was a special moment!! It speaks to the heart. This is the reward of increased knowledge and understanding within Truth and Reconciliation. This is the mindset and attitude of our new generation of students/people. This is why our teaching of the Indigenous people's past and the celebration of their culture is so crucial. This is why we keep going, 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 District'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 district 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**.



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 (NDP) 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.



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 teepees 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 other's 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 district 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 GOD'S LOVE



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... ACT JUSTLY, LOVE TENDERLY, WALK HUMBLLY WITH YOUR GOD. (MICAHA 6:8) ...



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