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Fall 2010

The official magazine of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents

Aboriginal Education



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On the Cover:

As M.A.S.S. President Paul Cuthbert says in his message on page 7, "Many school divisions across this province are involved in a variety of initiatives that not only aim to close the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners, but also help non-Aboriginal students, educators and the public be better informed about Aboriginal culture, history and education." This issue of The M.A.S.S. Journal includes articles that showcase divisions who are striving to "close the educational gap" by implementing new and innovative programs and courses. Their ideas are forward-thinking and inventive. We hope you discover what's possible as you read their stories.





Nancy Allan

Minister
Manitoba Education

Ministre
de l'Éducation
du Manitoba

A Message from the Minister

Education is the cornerstone of a productive, fulfilling life and a strong, progressive society. Providing quality, lifelong opportunities for Manitobans to reap the benefits of learning is at the heart of our partnership.

As we move forward, we have set several priorities, including the further development of Aboriginal education across the province. Enhancing graduation rates through relevant, culturally-appropriate education is just the beginning of our efforts.

I commend the members of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents for your ongoing leadership and commitment to quality education and the well-being of students across the province. Together, we are building a stronger Manitoba, one student at a time.

Message de la ministre

L'éducation est la pierre angulaire d'une vie productive et pleinement satisfaisante, ainsi que d'une société solide et progressiste. Le désir de donner aux Manitobains des possibilités continues et de qualité de pouvoir récolter les fruits de leur apprentissage est au cœur de notre partenariat.

Nous avons établi, à cet effet, des priorités parmi lesquelles le développement soutenu de l'éducation des Autochtones à l'échelle de la province. L'amélioration du taux d'obtention de diplôme dans le cadre d'une éducation appropriée et adaptée à la culture n'est que le début de nos efforts.

Nous félicitons les membres de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents pour leur leadership continu et l'engagement dont ils font preuve pour une éducation de qualité et le bien-être des élèves à l'échelle de la province. Ensemble, nous travaillons tous à édifier un Manitoba plus fort, un élève à la fois.



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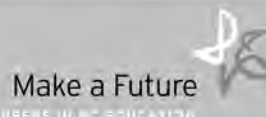
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A Message from the President



Paul Cuthbert
*Superintendent/CEO
Evergreen School Division*

As the President of Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.), I am pleased to present our Fall 2010 journal on the theme of Aboriginal education. Aboriginal education is one of M.A.S.S.'s priorities and this journal is one of the strategies our organization is using to raise awareness about Aboriginal issues and assist school divisions in their efforts to build success for Aboriginal learners.

Manitoba and Winnipeg have been identified as having the greatest concentration of Aboriginal people in Canada. The Aboriginal population in Manitoba public schools is growing more rapidly than any other population group. Awareness and recognition of the rapidly expanding

Aboriginal population in provincial schools has resulted in many school division initiatives, many of which are profiled in this journal.

While we have seen some improvements in the last decade, achievement levels and graduation rates for Aboriginal students are significantly lower than those of the non-Aboriginal students. The majority of Aboriginal youth does not complete high school; leaves the school system without skills for employment or adequate language and cultural knowledge of their own people; and feels that schooling experiences erode their identity and self-worth.

Even though the educational attainment levels have improved for Aboriginal youth as compared to older Aboriginal people, the advance of each new generation over the last has been a lot faster in non-Aboriginal groups. As a result, the gap continues to widen. Among the young and middle-aged, Aboriginal people are more than twice as likely not to have a high school diploma and they're less than a third as likely to have a university degree. This data alone should be a call to action for all public schools.

Aboriginal leaders have also expressed concern over the education of all Canadians with respect to knowledge of Aboriginal issues and Canadian history. Therefore, efforts are being made to integrate

Aboriginal perspectives into mainstream curriculum.

Many school divisions across this province are involved in a variety of initiatives that not only aim to close the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners, but also help non-Aboriginal students, educators and the public be better informed about Aboriginal culture, history and education. This journal profiles some of those great initiatives.

M.A.S.S. has formed an Aboriginal Education Ad Hoc Committee to address this very important issue in the coming year. M.A.S.S. and community members on the committee are Val Georges (Chair), Wayne Leckie, Ray Derksen, Bev Fontaine, Mary Courchene, Leon Tetreault and Byron Apetagon. We will keep you informed of the work of this committee as it develops.

As my predecessor Sandra Herbst wrote in our last journal on newcomers, "If our schools are to be communities of hope for all of our students, we must carefully consider Margaret Wheatley's contention of 'turning to each other' to figure things out." In this journal, colleagues from across the province are making their practice public, so that we can "turn to them" and listen to their stories. So, as you read these articles, I encourage you to read with reflection and with a sense of hope for all of our Aboriginal learners.



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Making a Difference for Aboriginal Learners

By Brian O'Leary

Simply put, too few of our Aboriginal students graduate. This is true in most schools and most school divisions. It is true in our school division, Seven Oaks. It is a truth we are working hard to change.

No single factor explains the way things are. Poverty, racism, history and family dynamics all play a part. And there is no simple solution.

In the Seven Oaks School Division we are working hard to change the circumstance of our Aboriginal learners so more of them succeed in school, graduate and are able to make a contribution and lead a fulfilling life. Believing that there is no singular or simple solution, we have approached the challenge of making a positive difference in the lives and life prospects of our Aboriginal students in many ways.

- We have worked with our Aboriginal families to actively engage them in our schools.
- We have listened to the stories of students' experience in our schools in order to appreciate what is working well and to be able to confront some hard and unpleasant truths.
- We have worked purposely to ensure that every child in our community and particularly Aboriginal students see themselves and their culture reflected in our schools.
- We have sought to understand and to limit the effect of poverty on our students.

We enrol families

We don't enrol students in our schools, we enrol families. This is especially important for Aboriginal children given the sad history of residential schools and the resulting legacy of hurt and mistrust of school systems. In Seven Oaks we begin involving parents



Photos from a divisional grad powwow.

almost from the birth of their child with free parent child literacy programming in every school. It continues with orientation meetings at the start of every school year from Kindergarten to Grade 8, where teachers learn the personal story of each child and their family in one-on-one meetings. Throughout high school each student and their family has a teacher advisor as a constant advocate throughout their high school years. The teacher advisor initially meets with students and their families before they ever register for

high school and is on the stage to see them graduate from Grade 12.

The role of the family in any child's education is crucial. By valuing the family we can support their ongoing interest in their child's education and enhance their capacity to support their child.

With positive relationships developed we gain added benefits. A group of Aboriginal parents in Seven Oaks that initially came together to probe issues of concerns, the Seven Oaks Aboriginal Parents (SOAP), has run a program of after school Aboriginal cultural activities

for middle years students for the past five years. Parents in the Elwick housing development run the Village Centre, a community-run service and development agency. Manitoba Education's Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents (BSSAP) program has supported a host of parent school activities at Margaret Park and Elwick schools that bring Aboriginal parents and elders into the schools with greater frequency.

Appreciating what makes a difference

In 2006 a group of Seven Oaks staff formed a research cohort whose work culminated in the release of the 2010 report *Celebrating Strengths: Aboriginal Students and Their Stories of Success in Schools*. The research cohort looked at the experience of Aboriginal education in Canada in general and in Seven Oaks in particular. They sought out and interviewed Seven Oaks graduates of Aboriginal descent.

Key to the experience of successful Aboriginal students in our schools was a strong sense of family and cultural identity. Successful students were proud of their heritage and their families were strong and supportive, helping them through difficult times. In the school, friends and a positive peer culture made a huge difference in the educational experience of Aboriginal learners. Students valued teachers who go the extra mile to build relationships and exhibit care. A teacher taking aside

a student to ask how they were doing or offer encouragement makes a real difference.

Those interviewed cited the valuing of Aboriginal culture and indigenous knowledge as being important. This was more common to the experience of recent grads than those who had left school in the 80s and 90s. Even these successful grads provided troubling accounts of their experience with racism:

At the same time, the narratives do reveal issues of stereotyping and racism by school staff. For example, Shania describes a math teacher who is frustrated by her requests for assistance in grasping a difficult concept. She was told, "I am not your personal math tutor and if your parents can't afford it there are tutors for low income families." When she became pregnant she had some teachers say to her, "So what are you going to do now? Be on Welfare?"

...

Educators, at times, may not be aware of the power of their words and actions and of the long term impact that they have upon students. Mike Rose (1999) writes, "Do not think that because a child cannot read a text, he cannot read you. Children can tell right off those people who believe in them and those who patronize them" (p. 17).

Can they see themselves?

It is encouraging that the more recent grads in the research study could cite more examples of seeing their culture and ways of knowing represented in their schools. This is a testament to the initiation and expansion of programs like Native Studies courses, Cree and Ojibway Heritage Language courses, fiddling, our Elder in Residence, our Aboriginal Artist in Residence, powwows, feasts, storytelling and talking circles in our schools and classrooms.

We know that it is important for our students to see themselves represented in the staff they encounter. Our community is diverse and that diversity must be embraced, valued and represented in our staffing. We had difficulty finding Aboriginal teaching staff. There were far too few enrolled in teacher education programs. To correct that situation we approached Manitoba Advanced Education and the University

of Winnipeg in partnership with The Winnipeg School Division to start our own education program for Aboriginal teacher candidates.

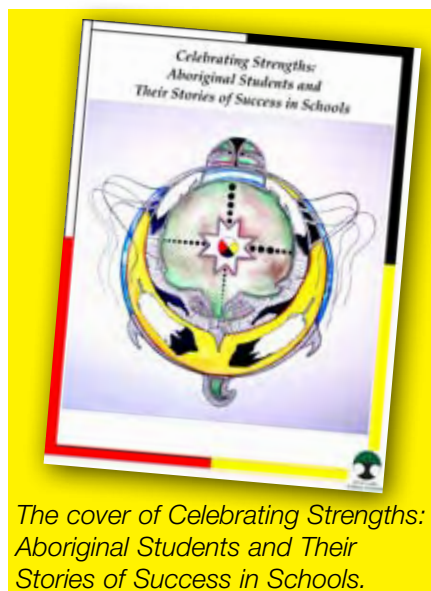
The teacher candidates are employed by us as teacher assistants and pursue Bachelor of Education courses on weekends and in the summer. The creation of this program provided an immediate boost to our Aboriginal staff complement and is educating a steady stream of well-qualified Aboriginal teachers.

What would you want for your own child?

None of the initiatives to ensure success for Aboriginal students matter if they don't lead to meaningful academic achievement. In order to meet that goal we need to provide support and keep expectations high. We need to avoid making premature judgements that limit student's futures and we need to deal systemically with the effects of poverty.

In Seven Oaks we have worked to alleviate the effects of poverty in the ways that many school divisions do—by providing nutrition programs, lower class sizes and greater parent and community outreach for schools in poor neighbourhoods. We've also worked very consciously to eliminate the negative stigma many students experience in school. We've eliminated school fees and charges for curriculum-related field trips. We've drastically lowered the cost of school supplies and made provision to waive the cost altogether when needed. We provide lunch supervision at no charge. These are important actions. What does it feel like to be the child who doesn't have school supplies, who can't join the class field trip or who can't stay for lunch because there isn't enough money at home?

We've also taken steps to help students raise their expectations for themselves. Our College and University Bound Program provide exposure to post secondary opportunities and mentorship to students from families where no one has ever gone on to post secondary study. We have experienced a 70 percent direct post secondary entrance rate for participants. The real barriers to high aspirations and post secondary



The cover of Celebrating Strengths: Aboriginal Students and Their Stories of Success in Schools.

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education is often more of one of how students see themselves and their future than one of ability or financial resources. The CUB program succeeds because it changes how students see themselves and their future.

In 2008 we launched the Bright Futures Program—a storefront tutoring and mentoring centre that serves our poorest neighbourhood, one with a significant Aboriginal population. The neighbourhood it serves has a historical graduation rate of 52 percent. Two years into the program 76 percent of the 100 participants are on track for on time graduation and 100 percent are still enrolled in school. For unsuccessful students to achieve more in school they must work harder and work longer. The tutoring and mentoring provided by Bright Futures gives students both the means and the motivation to achieve. The experience of Bright Futures is that students will work harder and can achieve greater success.

The Bright Futures and College and University Bound programs are proof that children disadvantaged by poverty can achieve if expectations and aspirations are high and they receive support. It is important then to maintain all students in the mainstream with healthy peers and help them keep up rather than putting them in classes where expectations are lowered and hoping that somehow they might catch up.

There is no one thing we should do to ensure great success for Aboriginal learners. There are many things we should do and if we maintain our optimism and work to improve every aspect of what we do, we will make the difference we hope for the Aboriginal Learners in our schools. ■

Brian O'Leary is Superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division.

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Aboriginal Pedagogies: Supporting Culturally Relevant and Culturally Inclusive Educational Practice

By Leah Gazan

One new direction for teacher training in Manitoba is to transmit educational practices and techniques that support inclusive classrooms (Manitoba Education, 2006). The rationale for this change in how teachers are trained reflects a growing understanding of the importance of increasing the cultural competency of pre-service teachers to ensure the inclusion of diverse worldview perspectives, including those found in Aboriginal cultures (Manitoba Education, 2007).

The Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg has responded by establishing new courses to meet these changing requirements for teacher certification. This has included a mandated Aboriginal Education course for pre-service teachers that must be completed as part of their degree requirements. This change has been challenged by some students who question the focus on Aboriginal Education in context of the dynamic racial, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity found in Manitoba schools. However, Aboriginal world views, when incorporated into the classroom in meaningful ways, effectively support inclusive educational practice.

One example of an Aboriginal world view that supports the inclusion of all students is the value of having a collective responsibility for the well-being of the whole community. This world view is premised on a belief in the importance of "living in harmony with the other human and nonhuman entities who inhabit the world" (Martin, 1996). When placed in context of a diverse classroom, this Aboriginal world view would require students to share equal responsibility in coming up with harmonious solutions to promote the wellbeing of the classroom

community. Students are required to listen and reflect upon the beliefs, values and points of view of others to discover collective solutions that support positive and cohesive relationships with their classmates.

As a result, all students have an equal place within the learning circle due to the focus on creating harmony with others. The framework of the "collective community" practised within the Aboriginal worldview places value on inclusion by engaging students equally in establishing a positive classroom environment. It also can be extended to include discussions about the importance of equal participation by all people, communities and nations to support increased harmony within the global village.

The practice of using the Aboriginal worldview of collectivity as a classroom management strategy has resulted in the recognition by many educators of the value of incorporating Aboriginal world views in the classroom as a means of achieving inclusion. At a practical level, this change is based on the increased success of Aboriginal students in the classroom. At a more philosophical level, teachers are beginning to recognize that traditional practices rooted in western world views often fail to meet the needs of diverse students in the classroom. This is especially true for students whose cultural values differ from the dominant values that form the foundation of our provincial schools.

Barton, *et.al.*, (2004) asserts that "schools tend to maintain the ideals and beliefs of a capitalist culture, positioning the cultures of poor, minority, immigrant and linguistically diverse families as subordinate" (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004, p. 5). Moreover, Shields (2004) argues that this subordination reflects the tendency of

schools to view student experiences that fall outside of middle class, dominant cultural norms and values as negative. As a result, difference is looked upon as a deficit, "that locates the responsibility for school success in the lived experiences of children (home life, home culture, SES) rather than situating responsibility in the education system itself" (p. 112). However, the increasing diversity in Manitoba's labour market requires the ability to work cross-culturally as a means to effectively participate in provincial and world economies. Schools, in this context, become an increasingly important venue to teach cross cultural skills as they are micro representations of the rich cultural diversity that now defines the global market.

Implementing practices that support inclusion, however, requires both an examination of the social foundations of school and how our personal world views may work to maintain the barriers that result in the school failure and poor achievement of minority and disenfranchised students. This personal examination is profoundly important given current educational trends which indicate that adjusting practices and gearing learning to better reflect the lived experiences of students' results in improved school performance.

The need for such change is supported by educational research where strong arguments are made to nurture differences among students by honouring cultural diversity in the classroom. As noted by Freitas and McAuley (2008), "the colour-blind position fails to recognize the lived experience of difference and the splitting that students suffer as they assimilate into school culture [while] avoiding the political and historical context of schooling" (p. 431). Thus, teachers who do not adopt practices that respect the

differences found in a student's cultural and social experience may risk excluding students from equal participation in the classroom.

The need to create moments of inclusion is especially important in urban centres where children and youth come to our schools from culturally and socially diverse contexts with a set of values and beliefs learned in their families and communities. Traditional approaches to addressing diversity have placed the onus on the student to adjust their worldview as a way to successfully navigate the cultural foundations of schools. This approach to addressing diversity has not been successful, as reflected in lower graduation rates in Aboriginal populations. As a result, it is imperative that teachers engage in practices that allow students to share their world views in meaningful and equitable ways.

The new Manitoba Social Studies Curriculum is an example of a tool that teachers can use to engage in discussions of diversity by exposing students to different interpretations of Canadian history and encouraging community involvement in the classroom. These multiple interpretations have included highlighting the distinct perspectives found in Aboriginal communities and the inclusion of a residential school unit, where students learn about this dark era in Canadian education.

Aside from changes to Manitoba curricula, the province has also acknowledged the importance of investing in programs that respect diversity through funding provided by the Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant (AAA). This grant aims to incorporate Aboriginal programs, professional development

training and perspectives into public schools.

Although the grant primarily focuses on increasing the academic success of Aboriginal students, the AAA has the potential to positively impact all students attending provincial schools (Manitoba Education, 2010). In a review of the discussions pertaining to the AAA grant, parents noted how AAA funding could be used to inform and educate non-Aboriginal students, staff and community about Aboriginal cultures, traditions and histories.

In addition, school division representatives found areas in provincial curricula where a natural integration of Aboriginal perspectives could occur "without requiring a lot of extra work" by teachers (Manitoba Education, 2010, p.4). Thus, the failure of teachers to integrate Aboriginal perspectives is not an issue of cultural mismatch nor of additional work but rather that "teachers need to build confidence in their ability to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum and understand that these efforts involve more than simply offering crafts" (Manitoba Education, 2010, p.4).

At the classroom level, teachers have worked to ensure that the diversity of the student population is reflected in teaching and learning. The Medicine Wheel, for example, has been incorporated into lesson plans to teach specific concepts and theories. Although this is a positive step, these teachings often occur outside of regular classroom instruction as separate or extracurricular activities. Moreover, rather than using the Medicine Wheel as a teaching technique, it is often used as an organizational chart,

leaving students with only a superficial understanding of the role of the Medicine Wheel in the transmission of values and beliefs.

However, when the Medicine Wheel is meaningfully incorporated into learning, there is the potential to demonstrate the interrelationships of all things, a foundational belief within the Aboriginal worldview. For example, Elder Percy Tuesday (2010) utilizes the Medicine Wheel to communicate the equality of all cultures and races, values of living with kindness and respecting others and the environment and the importance of honouring student autonomy. He also discusses how the Medicine Wheel can be used to provide students with a cross-curricular understanding of information taught in the classroom. Central to Elder Percy Tuesday's Medicine Wheel Teachings is the importance of equality and balance within teaching practice to ensure the inclusion of diverse student populations.

Another example of the way in which Aboriginal world views can work to enhance inclusive teacher practice



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comes from the belief that learning is based on the readiness of the student to acquire information. This approach utilizes “scaffolding” whereby individuals learn through active observation and sharing to achieve higher levels of understanding.

In this model an individual is not viewed as a “tabula rasa” but as an expanding vessel of knowledge and understanding in need of respectful guidance. Respectful guidance refers to planning for student learning within a context of a mutual respect for diverse world views

and based on the individual strengths of the learner. This may require educators to teach in ways which may contradict their own cultural styles. This shift is necessary, however, if we as teachers are to become culturally responsive to an ever-diversified student population.

Incorporating Aboriginal world views into teaching and learning extends beyond the commonly used symbols in the classroom. It is comprised of complex practices and values that guide the manner in which relationships are expressed and learning

occurs. It is rooted in a respect for inclusion of everyone in the learning community and a belief that all people have an important place in the learning circle. However, in order to develop a classroom dynamic where students truly find a place of belonging, teachers need to ensure teaching pedagogies speak to a wide cultural audience.

This is not only important for Aboriginal learners, but for all students who will have to function in an increasingly global community. This need for cross cultural proficiency has been recognized by the Province through legislated changes to teacher certification and enhanced curriculum. The implementation of core values grounded in Aboriginal world views effectively supports this goal while ensuring that all students regardless of cultural background are included in the voices of our schools. ■

Leah Gazan is a professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Winnipeg.



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Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: Aboriginal Perspectives in River East Transcona School Division

By Carole Shankaruk

Storyteller

Tell me a story, sweet Mother.
Of the Ancestors and their days,
Of how they walked with beauty,
Learning the Medicine Ways.

As you relate the stories,
I am allowed to see
The importance of every lesson
And how it applies to me.

Through another's example
I share the laughter and the tears.
Through another's experience
I learn how love can conquer fear.

Together we can journey
Through those other times
Reclaiming all the wisdom
Of the legacies left behind.

By Jamie Sams

*Excerpt from The 13 Original Clan Mothers.
Your Sacred Path to Discovering the Gifts,
Talents, and Abilities of the Feminine Through
the Ancient Teachings of the Sisterhood.
HarperCollins; First Edition (April 22, 1994).*

When we examine the concept of Aboriginal perspectives within the education system, it is important that we not only look to our future but also look to our past. As Aboriginal Peoples, our connection to the land makes us who we are and connects us to one another and the circle of life in which we all participate.

Mother Earth, culture, family and community are all woven together. This interconnectedness is expressed through our customs, values, language, arts, dances,

traditions and ceremonies, all which have been passed down from generation to generation.

The Elders have taught us that our teachings were based upon The Medicine Wheel. They say that the Medicine Wheel was a system of cultural values, a world view held by Aboriginal peoples as a way of living. There are four domains on the Medicine Wheel which are represented by all races that walk on Mother Earth: White (Caucasian), Red (Aboriginals), Yellow (Asian), Black (African-Americans). The Medicine Wheel also represents all four aspects of self: physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional.

Other components within the Medicine Wheel include the four key periods in the life cycle spanning from birth/infancy, to youth, to adulthood and finishing with elderhood/death. Many teachings are woven into the Medicine Wheel—the four directions, the four seasons, the four primary elements of fire, water, wind (air) and earth.

How does all this connect to education? The Medicine Wheel provides a holistic framework to support all students within the education system regardless of skin colour or race. Teaching Aboriginal perspectives within this system allows us to break down any negative stereotypes because the history of the First Peoples of Canada is being taught to *all* students represented within the Medicine Wheel.

When we are focused on the learning of all our students, we strive towards Mino-Pimatisiwin (healthy balanced lifestyles). The strategies we use can assist us as educators to role model, guide and mentor students and to teach both curriculum and culture which allows our students to create their own healthy balanced lifestyles (Mino-Pimatisiwin) and become effective global citizens.

Writing from a critical perspective, many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars speak about the importance of

having culture as the basis of learning; all recognize the need to address learning holistically. Traditionally, Aboriginal communities, parents and extended family members worked together to achieve educational goals for their children, once again focusing on the child as a whole.

Within our schools today we are using those teachings to focus on the strengths of our students and the development of the whole child. We are in partnership with our parents to create the best learning environments possible. Together, we create an educational climate that fits well with the concept of inclusion which allows every individual to feel accepted, valued and safe. "By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us" (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2006, p. 5).

Strategies and initiatives

Manitoba and Winnipeg have been identified as having the greatest concentration of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Awareness and recognition of the rapidly expanding Aboriginal population in provincial schools prompted Manitoba Education to request that all schools in Manitoba incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into all curricula. Since 1995 Manitoba Education has culturally and financially supported this process through, among other initiatives, the Aboriginal Academic Achievement grants available to all school divisions within Manitoba under the leadership of the Aboriginal Education Directorate.

River East Transcona School Division (RETSd) has incorporated authentic and successful Aboriginal cultural programming for our students and staff since 1995. Under the Aboriginal Academic Achievement portfolio our school division has imbedded Aboriginal perspectives directly into curriculum in all of our 42 schools. All schools within our school division submit

a written proposal documenting how they plan to implement Aboriginal perspectives into their student learning.

Within our Division many of our schools have implemented many innovative and creative ways to teach Aboriginal Perspectives. Each of our schools is presently at different places along the continuum of their learning and implementation of curriculum. On approval of their proposal by their Aboriginal Community Networker, funds are allocated to the school to support their school-wide initiatives.

In RETSD our Aboriginal Academic Achievement programming is driven by our AAA Steering committee which consists of: our Divisional Elder, an Assistant Superintendent, administrators, teaching staff, consultants, Aboriginal networkers, parents, student services, and the clinical unit representing all areas within Early, Middle, and Senior year levels. From the support and commitment of many of our staff throughout the division has evolved a mosaic of creativity and innovation regarding implementation of Aboriginal Perspectives into school learning environments.

Professional development

Under the guidance and leadership of our Divisional Elder, Mary Courchene, professional development learning sessions are offered to assist our teaching staff to implement Aboriginal perspectives with confidence into their classrooms. Curriculum consultants and Aboriginal networkers facilitate learning workshops which allow staff to gain confidence and knowledge regarding Aboriginal learning outcomes and cultural teachings. As we begin planning for our upcoming academic year we are extremely grateful for the ability to learn, share, and grow collectively under the leadership of Elder Mary Courchene. This has truly been one of our greatest honours as a school division within the Province of Manitoba.

Historical Relations Teaching Circles

School-wide staff professional development is also facilitated for all of our schools within the River East Transcona School Division. The entire school staff hear from an authentic Elder about the history of the First Peoples through a Historical Relations Teaching Circle. Once again,

it is important for us to know the past to move into the present and deal with the many issues challenging us in contemporary times. We still face the effects of residential schools and the impacts of that governmental policy in the education system today.

Research has been done that speaks to the trans-generational trauma that we are still dealing with in 2010. Statistics demonstrate that Aboriginal Peoples within Canada are the poorest of the poor, have the largest number of children in care, the highest incarceration rates, the highest suicide rates, and the fastest growing population facing diabetes, HIV and TB outbreaks (Statistics Canada 2006).

Our professional development program addresses these systemic issues through a half-day workshop. The program includes a Sharing Circle format with all staff participating in experiential learning. We have been told over and over again by our educators that they knew the work we were doing in Aboriginal education was important but after sitting in circle with Elder Mary Courchene and having an authentic voice share the history, the "light bulb finally went off" within them.

As a school division we not only look at the educational component but we also allow our staff to feel and experience the heart component. Collectively, we work together to give our educators the time to connect, learn and support one another in seeking their own personal Mino-Pimatisiwin. In response to school administrator requests, these professional development workshops are now offered to all 42 schools in River East Transcona School Division.

Historical Relations Teaching Circles for Students

Aboriginal Community Networkers, along with the Divisional Elder, also facilitate interactive classroom Teaching Circles with students and staff on historical relations between Canada's Aboriginal Peoples and Canada's social systems. Students engage in sharing circles where cultural teachings are offered and personal learning reflections are shared with the entire class. This learning presentation is linked to the Manitoba Social Studies and Canadian History curricula.

Continued on page 20



Continued from page 19

Through our school division's Aboriginal Academic Achievement initiatives, we provide learning opportunities about Aboriginal peoples, customs and history for Aboriginal students to increase a sense of belonging and pride in their heritage and for non-Aboriginal students to gain a better understanding about the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Divisional programming

Two years ago, we designed and launched the "Coyote Club," an after school cultural programming series for students in Grade 4 to 8. Two schools in our division, Donwood and Wayoata, hosted the Coyote Club. From October to March, students from all cultural backgrounds and divisional schools were welcomed to take part in this 16-week programming series to learn about Aboriginal culture. The activities participants engaged in at the club included powwow dance, traditional hand drum songs, sharing and smudging circle, sports and crafts.

The average number of students attending was between 50 and 70. As a wrap-up event to the series, students enjoyed a field trip to the "Boreal Forests Unlimited," where they were taken on a guided tour along a nature path with a traditional Cree medicine teacher and a biology teacher. They played games in the open rugged spaces, enjoyed a hot lunch and came back to the city with many fond memories and new understandings about the wonders of the natural world.

In the 2009-2010 academic year, club participants who gave their best effort to learn powwow dance and attended regularly were rewarded with the opportunity to design their own powwow regalia

(ceremonial clothing specific to Aboriginal powwow). These students participated in our second Divisional Powwow Grand Entry on April 22, 2010 (Earth Day) at Chief Peguis Junior High. Students demonstrated much excitement and pride over "earning" their first official regalia. Once again, students reflecting all races within the Medicine Wheel participated in their first Powwow that day. When asked to share what they liked best about Coyote Club, some of our participants answered: *"it was fun", "we can learn about our culture", "I learned a lot about respect", "I liked to learn about a different culture"*.

Due to the regular high attendance, observations of positive choices, feedback from administrators, demonstration of cooperative behaviours among participants, increased attendance, and the children's feedback, we will plan to repeat offering the "Coyote Club" for all students in our division who want to learn more about Aboriginal culture (Aymont Hunter, 2010).

Prior to these programs becoming divisionally directed, Donwood School had implemented after school programming of a similar format beginning in 2005. The discussions that are now occurring with Donwood's administrators are the positive outcomes they have seen within their students over the past five years: "Increased respect for self and others, more positive behaviours being exhibited and increased attendance," are some of the successes our students are demonstrating.

In today's world we all live at a very fast pace and sometimes we expect positive results within these short timelines. What we have learned in River East Transcona is that we need to continue to offer our initiatives over the long-term. We are developing strong relationships with

students and families and creating school environments where our children want to attend and who feel a very strong sense of belonging. Our efforts are providing successful and authentic programming for all of our students represented within the Medicine Wheel.

Mentorship Programs

Another initiative which has been highly successful has been the implementation of Mentorship programs within our schools. Senior Year students meet weekly with Early Years students and learn together about social responsibility via Aboriginal Culture. These mentorship programs include a 7-week leadership training segment for the Mentors, and then a 10-week program of shared activities and cultural teachings either after school or over lunch time.

The work that is being done in the River East Transcona School Division is an active partnership between educators, administrators, parents, support services and most importantly, our students. One of our goals collectively is to decrease the gap that exists regarding graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The Department of Education has identified those statistics to demonstrate that only 33.7 percent of Aboriginal students acquire Grade 12 successes in comparison to 62.7 percent for non-Aboriginal students.

Data collection has become very important to allow us, as a school division, to ensure that our programming is reflective of positive outcomes. Statistics collected from within our division within a six-year span (2004/05 to 2009/10) demonstrate that our senior years schools have collectively doubled their graduation rates for Aboriginal students.



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We know as a cultural group that we have many hurdles to overcome but what is so exciting at present is that the education system is uniquely placed to develop learning relationships with our students over a thirteen-year span. During these years we are given the opportunity to educate our students, develop effective healthy relationships with them, and ultimately allow them to reach Mino-Pimatisiwin. Our vision within Aboriginal Education is to develop effective, practical, and grass-roots resources to better assist everyone with their roles as teachers, guides and mentors for the benefit of the thousands of students we work with on a daily basis. Together we move toward our vision—the success of all our students within the Medicine Wheel in the River East Transcona School Division.

Meegwetch. ■

Carole Shankaruk is the Aboriginal Community Networker for River East Transcona School Division. She is of Metis descent and the great great great granddaughter of the Metis leader, Cuthbert Grant.

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The Kenanow Education Model: Honouring Our Children

By WahWahbigiinoojii, David Anderson

The education of all children is an important enterprise, and in light of the 55 percent failure rate of Aboriginal students in the current system, a new direction is needed for teacher education and school programming. The Elders at the University College of the North have designed a teacher education program focusing on Kenanow, All of U, which requires teachers to become more familiar with methods and ideas that are land-based, that are integrative and holistic, and that honour all students in their learning. Beginning with the teachings of the Muskegowuk, the Anishinabe and the Dene, the People of this Land, the central concept is to provide all students with the opportunity to learn to live, and to continue learning about living, Mino-Pimadiziwin, Mino-Bimadiziwin; The Good Life.

In 2006, the idea of a teacher education program based at the newly incorporated University College of the North was brokered. Training teachers in the north, to work in the north and be aware of the teachings from the north, was an idea that many First Nations and non-Aboriginal educators supported. The Governing Council of U.C.N. asked the Elders Council to create a vision for the teacher training program. Over a number of meetings, a number of days and many discussions, the Elders Council created the Kenanow Education Model, designed for the Kenanow Faculty of Education.

The Elders expressed several concerns with the current education system, particularly with the high number of students who drop out of the education system and are unprepared to live a productive, quality life in their communities. Education is supposed to prepare all students for their continued learning and to provide each individual with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to live a good life. In Muskegowuk terms, it is the role of all parents and community members to ensure that all children learn how to live Mino-Pimadiziwin, the Good Life.

To live Mino-Pimadiziwin means learning how to live on the land and learning the Anishinabe/Muskegowuk

3-R's: Respect, Relationship and Responsibility. These are the teachings that have been given to all people by our Ancestors and are there for all to pick up. Living in relationship to the land and with each other is essential for the sustained life in the north. Knowing our responsibilities to ourselves, our family, our community and our environment will enable each to be an active participant in planning and working in the north. Respectful living means knowing how to live on this land and with each other, and planning for the future of all children.

The Anishinabe/Muskegowuk 3-R's provide a framework for teachers to plan engaging activities that enable all students to learn, understand and participate in the history and life of this land. Education for All of Us means looking behind and looking ahead, and having the knowledge skills and attitudes that enable All of Us to live, Mino-Pimadiziwin.

Teaching and learning

The Kenanow Education Model asks educators to revisit the teaching/learning relationship. In traditional



terms, children learn by watching and listening, by paying attention to what is happening in our life and our environment. As we *Watch* and *Listen*, we *process* the information and think about what is occurring and what we know about and can do about what it is we are witness to. This applies to learning how to prepare dinner, to keeping a home, to providing for our families. It also means understanding the knowledge contained in Teachings, stories and activities in the community.

When a child has watched and listened and thought about what it is they are witness to, they prepare to get involved... to *DO*. Children prepare themselves to be participants in the activities and the knowledge they have been learning. This Traditional Anishinabe Learning requires teachers who are patient, who provide details, explanations and many opportunities for all children to become comfortable with the learning activity.

The Kenanow Education Model challenges teachers to further understand the learning process and to prepare a learning environment where students can participate in their learning in a wide range of holistic, integrated, challenging activities. Students are invited into the learning environment using their curiosity, their previous knowledge, their own love of learning and their environment.

The Kenanow Education Model tells us that language learning begins with the aural/oral process, listening to the language of others and understanding the vocabulary and syntax that is being used. Oral language skills come first and provide the foundation for later written language skills. Self talk, interactive talk, storytelling and listening to stories provide the foundation for later literacy skills. Traditional practices in the Oral Tradition provide the mental capacity and skills necessary for processing and understanding complex language and provide the vocabulary and skill set necessary for a written literacy.

Teaching opportunities that enable students to learn by watching, listening and participating in meaningful activities provide the foundation for students to become more confident in their own

learning and abilities. Teachers who plan and provide integrated, holistic learning opportunities will enable all students to understand the concept of *Weweni*—doing well in the activities they are engaged in.

The concept of *Weweni* is an essential teaching for all students. Learning to be proud of their accomplishments and to understand the importance of doing things well encourages all students to continue learning in deeper, meaningful ways. *If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well* is an old adage that continues to be relevant today. Students who are not given the opportunity to do things *Weweni* learn that they can produce work that is *Debinaak*, just okay. Teaching our



children to be proud of their learning and their accomplishments allows them to be active participants in their own learning. When we teach our children that a “C” is good enough to pass, students quickly learn that, *that’s all I have to do*, which is not good enough for any parent. They quickly learn that they *are* a “C” student, and they are not encouraged to *be Weweni*.

Honouring our children and their learning

Teaching our Teacher Candidates how to plan and provide meaningful, engaging learning opportunities

for their students is the essence of the Kenanow Teacher Education Program. Traditional classroom teaching is slowly evolving to include cooperative education, thematic based studies, integrated units of study and learning on the land. In some schools, a community garden provides an environment to learn biology, history, language, fractions and social studies.

In some schools, walking in the neighbourhood forest provides the opportunity to learn botany, social studies, physical and health education, mathematics, history, science and technology. Providing learning opportunities and environments for all students to engage in meaningful education allows students to connect to the history of their community and begin to think about the future, their own future and their responsibility to plan for the future of their children and grandchildren.

The learning environment is more than just the classroom environment. Children learn everywhere and all the time. The Kenanow Education Model asks all teachers to honour the knowledge and skills each child brings to the classroom and provide opportunities for each child to continue to grow and develop as a “human being.” (In all Aboriginal languages, the word each Nation has for themselves will usually translate to “human being.”) The learning environment is not just the traditional classroom, but ***all of creation***. The more our students come into contact with their whole environment, the more they will understand the importance of the Earth in their own lives.

In learning the skills and knowledges they need to live *Mino-Pimadiziwin*, students require the opportunity to be participant in their learning and have opportunities to *demonstrate* what they know. This aspect of assessment is important to the Kenanow Education Model.

The opportunity to demonstrate, to “show you what I know” allows all students to be humbled and proud of their accomplishments and their learning. For teachers, the teaching/learning process is to provide the students with the skills and knowledge, and then to

provide the students with the opportunity to *do something* with those skills and with that knowledge. Taxonomically, teachers provide the opportunities to learn Knowledge and Comprehension, then allow students to Analyze and Apply, and then—and this is the important part—provide the time and opportunity for students to Synthesize and Evaluate, to create something that demonstrates their learning and their understanding (Synthesis), and to allow them to think about what it is they have accomplished (Evaluation).

Benjamin Bloom thought like our Elders; our education system must truly engage, challenge and honour our students and their learning. Our Elders have seen too many of their children and grandchildren come out of school with the Debinaak attitude. They see that very few of their children and grandchildren understand Yaangwamizin—that determination to do things carefully and to do things with honour and pride, to accomplish tasks with Weweni, the respect one feels, the satisfaction one gets when they do something well.

Learning to learn

Learning is lifelong, as our Elder Bawdwaywidun Binese reminds us; *the road to knowledge is eternal*. He inspires us to continue to learn all there is to learn about our life, our history, our teachings and Mino-Bimadiziwin/Mino-Pimadiziwin.

Being a humble, yet brave learner, being respectful and truthful, being caring and loving, and being wise and honest are the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers. They provide our teachers with a template for their planning and their assessment strategies. All students want to be seen, to be honoured and to be respected. They want to learn the skills and knowledge that will enable them to live Mino-Bimadiziwin/Mino-Pimadiziwin. Their learning is constant and they demonstrate their learning every day, in ways that are not always acknowledged in the classroom.

The task of each teacher is to empower every child to understand the world and the technology around them, to honour the lives that have been lived before them and learn to be responsible enough to look beyond themselves and see what needs to be done to ensure that future generations have the opportunity to live Mino-Bimadiziwin/Mino-Pimadiziwin.

The Kenanow Education Model encourages and supports teachers to provide meaningful learning experiences for all students. Teachers provide activities that engage the students in ways that allow them to learn, to think about and discuss, and to acquire the skills and knowledge they can use to demonstrate what they know. Teaching students to use technologies like Power Point and other multimedia presentation software will allow students to *show you what I know*.

Giving students the time they need to incorporate new ideas and to understand and *use* new ideas and skills provides each student with the opportunity to do things Weweni, carefully, with respect and with humility.

Schools can support student learning by celebrating life in all its many facets and forms. Celebrating student successes in school and outside school, including community events and activities, and moving the classrooms into the natural world will teach all students that life is lived all the time, in all of Creation.

We acknowledge and celebrate those schools and those teachers where meaningful learning opportunities occur and encourage teachers to share their experiences and their skills with others. Classroom gardens are being grown in Northern Manitoba and the students have learned important lessons of respect and helping others. Urban High School students have created films and videos which show others that a Good Life can be lived without drugs or alcohol. Respecting others means working and sharing with others, and classroom and school environments where students work with other students are celebrated and encouraged.

The Kenanow Faculty of Education provides these foundations for our teacher candidates and is working with schools across the North to create positive learning environments for all students. The move toward a respectful learning community is being seen across Turtle Island¹ and all of our children will be better educated for it.

Ekosi,
Maa Sii Ch'k

Wab Wabbigiinoojii – David Anderson is Dene/Anishinabe and was born in Ontario. He has been an instructor in the Kenanow Faculty of Education – University College of the North in The Pas, Manitoba, since its inception in 2008. He can be contacted at dbanderson@ucn.ca.

Reference

¹ First Nations refer to this land as Turtle Island. It is also more recently known as North America. See/Hear Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories* for more information.

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Shaughnessy Park School – Winter 2009: A field trip to Fort Whyte Provincial Park, Manitoba. Students make a stop in the teepee and recognize the seven sacred animals that represent the Seven Teachings.



William Whyte School – Fall 2009: Students at William Whyte School, Winnipeg, Manitoba, are participating in morning exercise with weather terms. Ojibwe Language Teacher, Sophie Boulanger, holds up a picture of a Nice Day – Mino-Giizhigan – and students are identifying the weather in Ojibwe.



William Whyte School – Fall 2009: Students are listening to the teaching of the petro form at the Whiteshell Provincial Park. They are connecting the Seven Teachings they had received in the classroom and identifying the petro form in Ojibwe: Turtle – Mikinak.

Revitalizing and Sustaining Aboriginal Languages in the Winnipeg School Division

“Language is the principle instrument by which culture is transmitted from one generation to another, by which members of a culture communicate meaning and make sense of their shared experience. The threat that their language could disappear is a threat that their distinctive world view, the wisdom of their ancestors and their ways of being could be lost as well.” Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996

By Val Georges, Sophie Boulanger and Geraldine Whitford

Over the years the Winnipeg School Division has undertaken a number of Aboriginal language program initiatives to support and strengthen existing languages and to encourage further language acquisition. Just over 1,000 Aboriginal students in division schools speak Ojibwe, Cree or Oji-Cree as a first language and most Aboriginal students have had some exposure to an Aboriginal language.

Ojibwe and Cree programming is provided to all students at Children of the Earth High School and Niji Mahkwa School. A few other schools have also offered Cree and Ojibwe as a course or as an after-school initiative. Overall, these programmes have contributed to the ongoing efforts to revitalize and sustain existing Aboriginal languages.

Most recently, the Winnipeg School Division has embarked upon a new initiative intended to address simultaneously a number of Aboriginal language needs. The Aboriginal Language Support Teacher works with classroom teachers intensively over a 13-week period to teach an Aboriginal language to students and teachers. Participating teachers acquire the language and

learn strategies to deliver second language programming while students acquire language and cultural concepts. Presently, six schools and eight teachers have participated in the Ojibwe language program and plans are underway to implement Cree language programming in another six schools.

The program began with a survey of schools to determine interest. Interested schools assess teacher and community interest and began to plan delivery and develop capacity to sustain Aboriginal language programming. The Ojibwe language support teacher commits to support programming for a minimum of three years. Programming is developed collaboratively. Teachers determine the curricular area, incorporate general learning outcomes and target specific concepts. Materials and resources are adapted or developed to meet the student's needs as learning progresses during the 13-week program. To support and facilitate continued learning beyond the program, the Ojibwe Language Support Teacher provides language, resource material and instructional support to participating teachers. In addition, professional learning and Aboriginal language classes for teachers are offered at various times throughout the school year.



Student learning

The students have taken this “gift of language” to a level that will not only provide them with self awareness and self confidence but it enhances their understanding and respect for all cultures. William Whyte Community School has completed two cycles of Ojibwe as a second language learning. Students have demonstrated greater participation in class and pride in their identity. The students state that they share the language they have learned in class with their families, thereby strengthening the school’s relationship with the community.

Two Grade 4 students at Ralph Brown School shared their experience in the Ojibwe language program:

I enjoyed learning the Ojibwe language... I learned how to count, say the days of the week, how to introduce myself and ask other students where are they from. I also enjoyed playing the Ojibwe games like counting game, apple tree and the guessing action game. I felt good as a person and was able to communicate with other people, and I felt free to go learn outside the classroom on traditional teachings such as the tobacco ties. I'd really like to learn more on Powwows and on traditional teachings.

...

I come from a Filipino background and I speak Tagalog. I think it is important to learn another language so I can speak to other people. I speak two languages, English and Tagalog, and am learning other languages such as French, Japanese and Ojibwe. I feel smart and very happy to learn languages. It is important for Anishinabe people to learn their language because it is their language. I also learned it to show respect for Anishinabe people and I now know where they come from and can understand them more. I really enjoyed learning about the Sweat Lodge, it taught me to respect and love more.

The students at General Wolfe School have shown tremendous progress in learning the language. They are learning about the community reserves in Manitoba through a Native Studies Course. Vocabulary representing the community structure was introduced and practiced daily. Students were made

aware of the First Nation Timeline and traditional stories were shared. A field trip to Lower Fort Garry is incorporated to educate the students on the first European Settlers in Canada, Treaty Relations and the gathering of First Nations.

It is important for students to experience firsthand the language and land-based contexts beyond the classroom. Field trips included sage-picking, animal-tracking and historical sightseeing. The language experiences strengthen curriculum in science, social studies, health and math. Classroom experiences include games and songs, opening exercises, greetings, weather terms, the Seven Teachings, counting, calendar updates and simulated conversations. Community resource people are an important part of programming as they are used to extend and expand Ojibwe language growth.

Teacher learning

Teachers participating in the program have immersed themselves in both the language and culture to provide the students with the greatest opportunity to learn language in a meaningful way. Teachers who began as non-Ojibwe



The Peace Banner Project. Photo on this page and the border above by Travis Bevan.

Joe A. Ross School in The Pas

By Bev Fontaine, Director of Education

Since we've opened our doors at Joe A. Ross School, maintaining our Cree Language was always one of the goals of the community. In a report completed in 1992 by Opaskwayak Educational Authority, (*Rebirth of the Cree Language. Cree Language Survey*), it was found that “The Cree language on Opaskwayak Reserve was diagnosed as being a Declining Language in the community” (p. 8).

As a result of the survey, we consulted with the Elders on the direction we should take with the Cree language program. Out of the consultations came many ideas, one of which was to implement Cree Immersion in our school.

In 2005, we began the Cree Immersion program in kindergarten. We were overwhelmed by the feedback of the community. Three of the four kindergarten classes were delivered in the Cree language. We have continued to build on the program each year. In 2010, we have Cree Language as the main means of instruction up to Grade 4. We have 46 percent of our student population from kindergarten to Grade 4 enrolled in Cree Immersion with the remaining 54 percent receiving Cree as a separate subject. Our plan is to have total immersion to Grade 6. Our ultimate vision is fluency in the language.

With this program in place, we are seeing the younger generation, our future leaders, beginning to understand and grasp the language, using it at home as well as in school. As educators and parents, it is extremely pleasing to hear the Cree Language being spoken.



speakers have demonstrated a great deal of courage and commitment in delivering instruction. As teachers' competence in the language grows, they begin to apply the Aboriginal language to more complex concepts and instructional processes. One Grade 4 classroom teacher who was working with her class on a Science unit on plants adapted the unit and linked this topic to the Four Sacred Medicines. The teacher used

Ojibwe conversation on greetings between two students at Ralph Brown School

(*Bezbig - 1st person and Niizh - 2nd person*):

Bezbig: Boozhoo Aaniin e izhinigaa-zoy-an? (Hello, How are you? What is your name?)

Niizh: Boozhoo, Naomi n'dizhinigaa-z ni daakoz! (Hello, my name is Naomi. I'm not feeling well!)

Bezbig: Shoomiingwenin? (Smile.)

Niizh: ' (Smiling face.)

Bezbig: Miigwech! (Thank You!)

Niizh: Marnetta izhinigaa-zo. (Her name is Marnetta.)

Bezbig: Aaniin wii ezhwebak agochiing? (How will the weather be outside?)

Niizh: Mino Giizhigan agochin. (It's going to be a nice day.)

Bezbig: Aandi Wenjiiyan? (Where are you from?)

Niizh: Manitoba n'doonjii. (I am from Manitoba.)

Bezbig: Miigwech Giga waabamin! (Thank you and I will see you again!)

the content, Ojibwe language and the inquiry process to teach students about plants. Students explored the medicines through visuals and drawing, video production and hands-on experiences such as reproducing a common medicinal remedy. The unit was extended to include the teaching of the tobacco tie and students were able to visit a Sweat Lodge in Birds Hill Park. The students placed tobacco ties on trees for the teachings.

The Ojibwe Language Support Teacher works directly with the classroom teacher and students by modeling the language and making connections to classroom learning on a daily basis. Initially, the Ojibwe Language Support Teacher takes a greater role in the instructional process but as the teacher gains confidence he/she assumes greater responsibility for the language and the instructional processes. Teachers continue to integrate and deliver the language across all subject areas after the program block has ended. Where possible teachers are encouraged to gain fluency and expand their use of the target language by interacting and gaining support from fluent staff in the school or parents and community members.

Evidence of continued Ojibwe language integration after the Support Teacher moves on to another school occurred this year at Strathcona School through *The Peace Banner Project*. The

students incorporated the medicinal teachings they received from the language class to create this story. The *True Worth of Mother Earth* recounts the teachings of the four sacred medicines: Tobacco, Sweet Grass, Sage and Cedar and how these medicines are very important gifts from Mother Earth. The vocabulary of the animals, medicines and the natural surroundings are all in the Ojibwe language which the students are utilizing from previous learned vocabulary. In Art class, students created water paintings depicting the story of the animals and medicines. The finished project is a large banner with the story and the paintings along the side (see photos). Students at Strathcona School have benefited through language classes in many ways and are able to recount and further develop these teachings to other learning experiences.

Our goal is to eventually have the capacity within the Winnipeg School Division to deliver Aboriginal Language programming inclusive of all nations: Cree, Dene, Dakota, Michif, Oji-Cree and Inukutuk. ■

Val Georges is Director of Aboriginal Education, Sophie Boulanger is an Ojibwe Language Support Teacher, and Geraldine Whitford is the Aboriginal Educational Consultant/ Aboriginal Academic Achievement Support, for the Winnipeg School Division.

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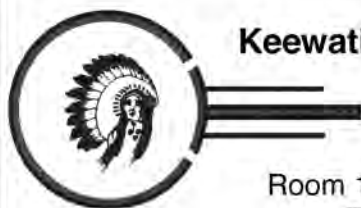
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On the Land: The Integrated Approach in Frontier School Division

By Dave Swanson and Byron Apetagon

Geographically, Frontier School Division covers much of the province and is one of the largest school divisions in North America in terms of land covered. Over the years, the division has developed a strong commitment to the language and culture of First Nations Communities in which its schools are situated. Although the division has its challenges, given its geography, it has unique opportunities to carry out this commitment in the context of its incredibly beautiful Northern environment which supports tourism, fishing, trapping, hunting, camping and all types of outdoor living opportunities. The variety of outdoor opportunities is a valued asset to support, strengthen and enrich teaching and learning in Frontier School Division.

The majority of the student population within Frontier School Division communities is of First Nations origin. The division believes in involving students in land-based approaches for quality learning from which students can benefit for life. The division constructed the Sea Falls Wilderness Outdoor Education Camp where teachers, parents and students have been able, since 1991, to reside and use as a base camp. Concepts of outdoor living, survival skills and academic subjects are being taught at the wilderness camp during all four seasons.

The learning principle that children learn 90 percent of what they do with their hands, minds and working with concrete materials is fundamental to the division's integrated curricula. The outdoors is the vehicle for much of this learning, while providing a rich opportunity to learn the native Cree language. Students learn to name living and non-living things in their immediate surroundings and learn about the history of their communities,

surrounding lakes, rivers and points of interest.

The two Norway House Frontier School Division schools, Jack River and Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Education Resource Centre, incorporate land-based approaches in all subject areas available in its Norway House schools.

Because Norway House is situated in a very rich, untouched and valuable wilderness, the natural outdoor surroundings are limitless in assisting teachers and students to be involved all types of outdoor class activities. Over the years, both schools have consistently delivered a wide variety of outdoor educational activities in academic, survival, traditional, life and cultural skills.

Precisely because of these land-based approaches, the results have proven to be successful. Many present and former students have become knowledgeable and avid outdoors people. The added component of the seven sacred teachings has been more successfully taught within the context of land, water, and air. Furthermore, outside cultural and recreational programs within the community have adopted the land-based approaches into their own programming.

Jack River School

Jack River School has 419 students from nursery through grade six. In recent years, classes have travelled to the Sea Falls wilderness camp where students and teachers are busy learning about fishing, hunting, trapping, boat and water safety, canoeing, earth sciences, physical sciences, and safety in the outdoors, biology, chemistry, outdoor food preparation, cooking, arts and crafts and more.

Teachers make precise outdoor educational plans in relation to the curriculum topics being delivered in the classroom. Students are being prepared to do what is expected during outdoor educational



trips. Community resource persons and programs are often incorporated and integrated into the outdoor educational plans. As a result, the Sea Falls wilderness camp trips are very rewarding, fun and successful.

Jack River School has begun an outdoor flower bed and vegetable gardens around the school. All classes are involved in the process of the preparation of tilling, seeding, planting, germinating, and nurturing growing plants. Students learn about which plants are suited to growth in northern areas of Manitoba where

Norway House is situated. During this process, students are busy with class lessons involving research, measurement, observations and daily record-keeping. Again, the garden and flower bed land based approach has inspired several homes in the community of Norway House to grow their own flowers and garden beds.

One of the most remarkable land-based integrated programs is based on the seven sacred teachings at Jack River School. Although the seven sacred teaching programs is an emotional well-being program, many of its activities promoting

each of the seven teachings are carried out in the context of the outdoors and the natural environment. The teachers take their classes to the outdoors to enhance and strengthen each teaching. As a result, the students' behaviour and attitudes have considerably improved over the years.

Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Educational Resource Centre (HBOIERC)

HBOIERC is the larger school with a student population of 1,172 from N - 12. The HBOIERC classes deliver outdoor educational programs at Sea Falls wilderness camp all year long. Teachers work hard to prepare all subject areas in the context of land based approaches and perspectives and students spend considerable time and energy preparing and carrying out the activities of the integrated curricula on the land.

In the last three years, students have undertaken canoe excursions between the Norway House and Cross Lake communities. In this venture students who participate in the canoe trips relive, experience, and revamp skills, learn history, and learn to excel in land and water safety and all the skills of living on the land. On these trips the students are involved in learning canoe safety and water skills, mapping, food preparations, scheduling, and daily journal writing and much more.

The Apasapowin canoe trips (see related sidebar on page 33) have been very successful as the canoeists hail from the communities of Cross Lake and Norway House. Students from Otter Nelson River School in Cross Lake join with students from Helen Betty Osborne and with the help of experienced resource people familiar with the river, elders and parents, canoe the hundred or so miles of the Nelson or its tributaries. The adults who know the river tell stories during camp, imparting their knowledge of Cree and history to the younger people. In this venture students from the two communities learn about each other in the areas of lifestyles, language, history, and, most important, they develop life-long relationships.

In the winter seasons, Helen Betty Osborne classes go on outdoor educational trips by skidoos to surrounding lakes to observe new territories



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inaccessible in the summer seasons. Students learn about the names of secluded and isolated lakes and rivers where in the past nomadic Cree families lived off the land. Again, the students experience how life was like long ago through land-based approaches. The students are involved in various activities such as ice fishing, snaring, tracking wild life, building shelters and fires, and cooking in the outdoors. As a result, lifelong and valuable lessons are learned.

Frontier School Division supports student success through increased engagement in First Nations Language and Cultural programming. Frontier's teachers use the outdoors to promote language, culture, traditions, science, mathematics, social studies, health, physical education, the arts, and survival skills. Emotional

and spiritual well being through counseling, mediation and conflict resolution is encouraged. The seven sacred teachings, the sacred trees program, and the virtues program are available for use in classrooms.

Through these programs and by being exposed to the outdoors, students are learning to show respect for themselves, the people they deal with every day and for the land around them. They are gaining perspectives on their history and on the sustainability of this beautiful land, its resources and the life

lived upon it. The revitalization of First Nations Languages and approaching the curriculum through Aboriginal perspectives are the keys, the division believes, to increasing student engagement and achievement, including graduation from Grade 12 (*Frontier School Division Strategic Plan 2010-2014*). ■

Dave Swanson is the Area 5 Superintendent and Byron Apetagon is the First Nations Language and Culture Curriculum Developer for Area 5, in the Frontier School Division.

The "Apasapowin" Story

By Byron Apetagon

When Danny Halcrow was a young boy he would go with his grandfather to the winter trap lines. Danny remembers that his grandfather would pull him along on a homemade winter sled. Danny would sit in a box on top of the sled covered with warm blankets. As Danny's grandfather pulled him along the winter trails, he would notice his grandfather looking back at him on the sled to see if he was fine.

As teacher Hubert Hart of HBOIERC of Norway House and Danny Halcrow of ONR School of Cross Lake discussed the ideas of linking students' learning by way of canoeing between Cross Lake and Norway House, they agreed to use the Cree name "Apasapowin".

The Cree word "Apasapowin" means "Looking Back". Just as Danny Halcrow saw his grandfather looking back to see if he was safe, teachers Hubert Hart and Danny Halcrow wanted their students to learn more about their histories of their communities and rivers, in order to appreciate learning the beauty and the unknowns that exist on the mighty rivers of the Nelson. This way their students may "look back" on their memories and experiences from the Apasapowin canoe trip.

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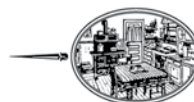
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SINCE 1977

Everyone's Business:

Aboriginal Education in Manitoba

By the staff of the Aboriginal Education Directorate

A boriginal education is one of Manitoba Education's key priorities. The department and many partner organizations, including a number of school divisions, are involved in a variety of initiatives that not only aim to close the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners, but also help non-Aboriginal students, educators and the public be better informed about Aboriginal culture, history and education.

Manitoba Education wants to see increased Aboriginal student success. Objectives leading to this goal are outlined in the *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan (AEEAP) 2008-2011*. The AEEAP builds upon the former *Aboriginal Education Action Plan 2004-2007*, complementing existing activities with new opportunities. A publication is available in English online at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/abedu/action_plan/index.html and in French at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/efpa/plan_action/index.html.

Coordinated by the Aboriginal Education Directorate, the AEEAP is a multi-departmental plan involving:

- Aboriginal and Northern Affairs;
- Advanced Education and Literacy;
- Education;
- Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade; and
- Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors.

As Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Honourable Eric Robinson is Minister responsible for Aboriginal education. Manitoba Education works closely with Aboriginal and Northern Affairs on the alignment of Aboriginal education. Some activities being undertaken by Manitoba Education are described in the following paragraphs.

Key investments

Manitoba Education's key investments that lead to student success in Aboriginal education include:

- The Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) Grant which is provided to school divisions to assist with current programming or the implementation of new programs that target academic success for Aboriginal students. The AAA Grant budget in 2010/11 is \$6,500,000; and
- The Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents (BSSAP) Fund that supports 45 projects in 19

school divisions with a focus on languages and cultures of Aboriginal students through building partnerships with Aboriginal parents and communities. The BSSAP 2010/11 project funding budget is \$600,000. Project schools have the opportunity to gather annually to share best practices. A DVD highlighting five BSSAP success projects was developed. More details about the project can be found online at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/bssap/index.html.

Data and research

Increasingly important is data and research that helps to drive decisions regarding Aboriginal education and policy directions. Manitoba Education is involved in:

- Aboriginal Identity Declaration (AID) collection, in partnership with schools and school divisions in the provincial school system. Through the collection of AID data, the department is better informed about the number and location of Aboriginal students in the provincial school system and can better assess various dimensions of Aboriginal student success. This declaration project has become more successful through increased efforts of AID promotion throughout the province.
- The Aboriginal Teachers' Questionnaire (ATQ) that gathers information on the number and location of self-identified Aboriginal teachers across the province. The ATQ was initially distributed in 2006. A follow-up ATQ was distributed in 2009. Information received through the ATQ's was analyzed and reported back to school divisions following each survey. The ATQ reports are on-line at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/publications.html.
- Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) has an Aboriginal Education Action Plan which includes



a priority on data to define, collect and share. The idea is to create a comparable pan-Canadian picture of Aboriginal educational achievement through the use of provincial, territorial, Statistics Canada, and other data. Manitoba has been lead on this priority since 2004.

- Making Education Work (MEW), a demonstration project with the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, sought to improve high school graduation rates and enrolment in post-secondary for Aboriginal students. The research was conducted in 3 provincial schools and 3 First Nations schools - Cross Lake, Norway House, Peguis, Selkirk, Swan River and Thompson. The research explored the impact of community, family, academic and career interventions. Each school worked in partnership with local Aboriginal community organizations. Program implementation was completed in June 2009 with the evaluation process expected to be completed by December 2010.
- The Aboriginal Education Research Forum (AERF) is an annual forum designed to address shared understanding of the research with Aboriginal peoples and communities. The 6th Annual Forum was held at the Victoria Inn in Winnipeg, April 13-15, 2010. The 7th Annual AERF is being planned for April 26-28, 2011. Check out www.aerf.ca for more information.

Partnerships

Manitoba Education is increasingly supportive of and engages in partnerships that enhance educational stewardship through increased dialogue with First Nations communities, Aboriginal organizations, Elders, and education, training and post-secondary education stakeholders. Manitoba Education works diligently to improve outcomes through a number of partnerships which include:

- Manitoba Education and The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Working Group, that in partnership is working toward improving education outcomes for students in Manitoba First Nations schools.
- The department, with Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) and Louis Riel

Institute (LRI) has a working partnership to improve education outcomes for students in Manitoba schools through projects on learning resources development.

- Manitoba Education relies on input and advice from the Aboriginal community through the Aboriginal Education Directorate Advisory Council (AEDAC), established in April 2004. This council focuses on matters related to programming, policy and initiatives in K-12 Aboriginal education. A second council, the Advanced Education Training and Literacy Aboriginal Advisory Council (AETLAAC) focuses on matters related to training, post-secondary education and employment. These councils play a vital role in ensuring there is voice from the grassroots Aboriginal community on all aspects across the education continuum.
- Manitoba Education has a partnership with The University of Winnipeg. The Shine On Initiative is intended to help increase representation of Manitoba's Aboriginal community in post-secondary education. The department-approved school initiated course is delivered through the U of W Collegiate to high school students who take the course on campus.
- Partnerships with the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) include:
 - » alternative formats of curriculum and resources for blind and visually impaired. Memorandums of Understanding support Speech Language Pathology and Deaf Education, with a goal to build capacity of MFNERC specialists in First Nations schools.
 - » The School Improvement Project (SIP) which was implemented from September 2007 to June 2009 to improve English Language Arts and Math learning outcomes in four specific First Nations communities: Broken Head, Long Plain, Brochet and Fox Lake.
 - » MFNERC submitted a proposal to INAC with the support of Manitoba Education and Healthy Child Manitoba (HCM) for the

Education Partnerships Project. This project is aimed at positively impacting student development in Manitoba First Nation-operated schools. Manitoba Education is working in partnership with MFNERC on 3 activities:

- A Model for Success - to examine the provincial assessment framework and suggest revisions for implementation in First Nations Schools
- Living for Learning - to evaluate the efficacy of private home placement programs for students who must leave their home community to attend school
- First Nations Virtual High School - to create a sustainable service to provide web-based high school courses to remote First Nations students
- Western Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) First Nations, Metis and Inuit Directors of Education involves Western and Northern jurisdictions to work together to promote and support improved outcomes for Aboriginal students/learners through shared actions related to common priorities.
- Manitoba Education is currently working with the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba on Treaties teacher resources for schools.
- Manitoba Education partners with Frontier School Division, Mystery Lake School Division and other partners to address the development of Cree language resources for the classroom as well as teacher professional learning in the area of Cree Language teaching.

Support to schools

Manitoba Education continues to participate in initiatives that help educators better understand and address the effects of socio-economic conditions on student success. For example:

- The Community Schools Partnership Initiative (CSPI) funds and supports 25 project schools serving low socio-economic neighbourhoods, helping schools develop a comprehensive range of supports and approaches to meet the needs of children, youth and

families. A number of projects include BSSAP project funding and in the 2009/10 school year 3 new CSPI sites were added to include Parent Child Centres funding from Healthy Child Manitoba. Two administrative resources were developed to support project sites, and annual training initiatives are coordinated for project sites to meet their project needs.

Curriculum projects

Aboriginal Education curriculum projects are developed in assisting teachers and students increase their cultural competency and understanding of Aboriginal peoples. Such projects include:

- *A Journey from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competency* is a training manual and kit which includes a 4-day training component. The training manual was developed to assist teachers with useful and accessible tools that respect the cultural traditions of Aboriginal children and their families. Manitoba Education is coordinating training with school divisions, and in collaboration with First Nations

schools through the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre.

- Current topics in First Nations, Inuit and Metis Studies is a full credit course intended for grade 12 students. The course is multi-disciplinary and allows students to explore and develop skills and concepts in Social Studies, ELA, the Arts, Geography, and Law.
- From Apology to Reconciliation: A Manitoba Residential Schools Survivors Social Studies Project announced on June 11, 2009. The project includes new resources for the Grade 9 and 11 Social Studies and History curricula, which will assist teachers in providing students with culturally appropriate resources regarding residential schools. The department has developed an interactive website that highlights the project areas. From Apology to Reconciliation – Residential Schools DVD and Teachers Resource Guide are currently under development. Manitoba Education will continue to respond in positive ways on the path toward healing and reconciliation that will see opportunity to further the

dialogue and expand awareness of all citizens to the true history of residential schools.

- K-12 Aboriginal Languages and Cultures: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes 2007. The Framework enhances Aboriginal language, culture and community based student learning in Manitoba schools.

Manitoba Education is focused on goals to increase student engagement and high school completion, as well as family and community engagement and educational stewardship. Due to many factors including jurisdictional and demographic realities, this task is not easy.

Manitoba is encouraged that stakeholders are continuing and increasingly making Aboriginal education a priority. To do so, helps to create a better understanding of Aboriginal people and *Bridging Two Worlds*. ■

Additional information is available from the staff at the province's Aboriginal Education Directorate at 945-7886 or by email at aedino@gov.mb.ca.



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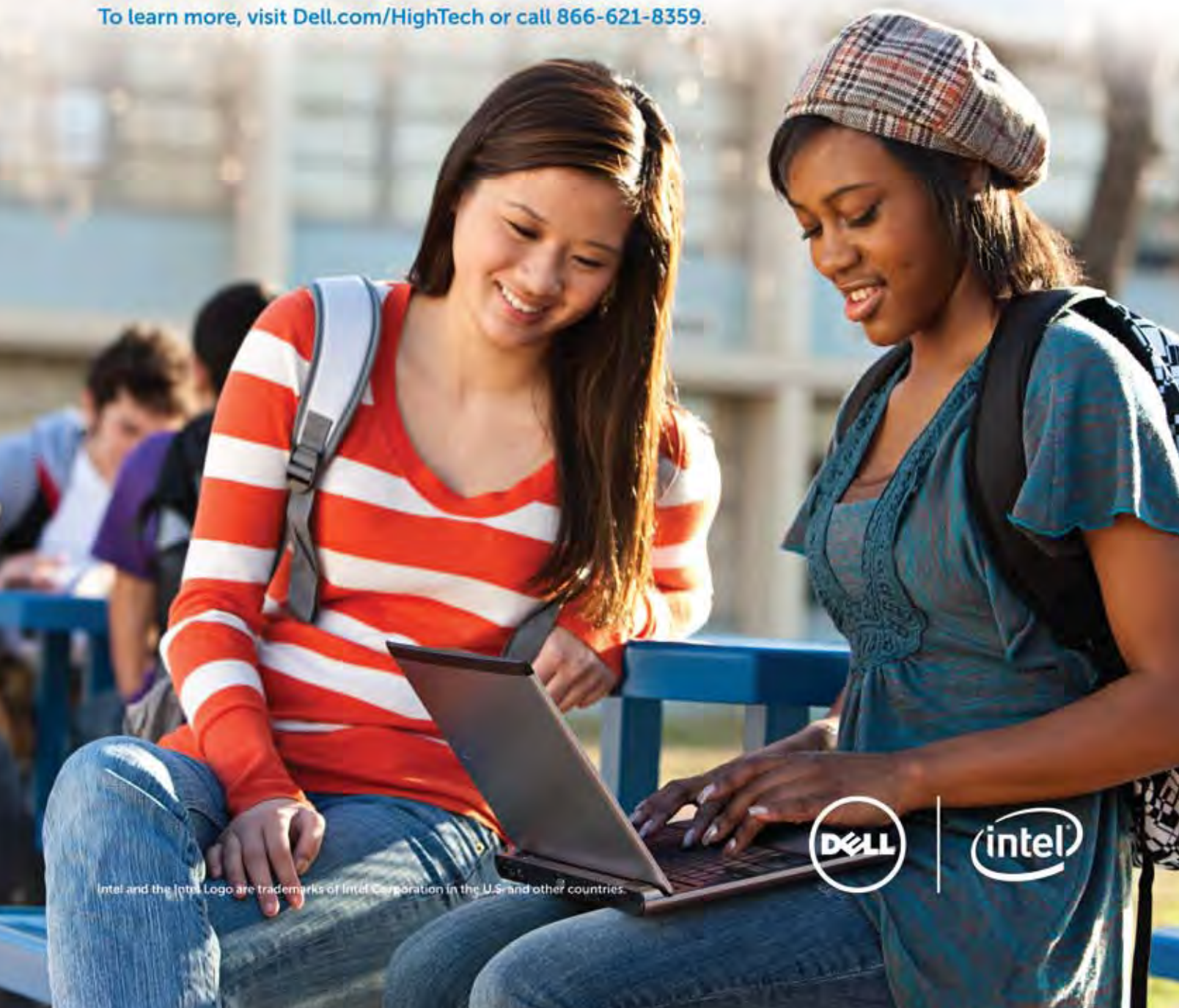


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