



ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
*Lighting the Way ~ Rejoicing in Our Journey*

# Indigenous Education Newsletter

## Indigenous Education SCCDSB Family and Community April 2019 News

# Truth and Reconciliation in the Classroom

[Calls to Action](#) 62 and 63 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission emphasizes the need to include learning that builds student understanding of both the historical and contemporary stories and perspectives of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people while building intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect when laying out next steps towards Education for Reconciliation:

Call 62.i. - Education for Reconciliation (TRC Calls to Action)

"We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to make age-appropriate curriculum on ... Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions ... a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students."

Call 63.iii. - Education for Reconciliation (TRC Calls to Action)

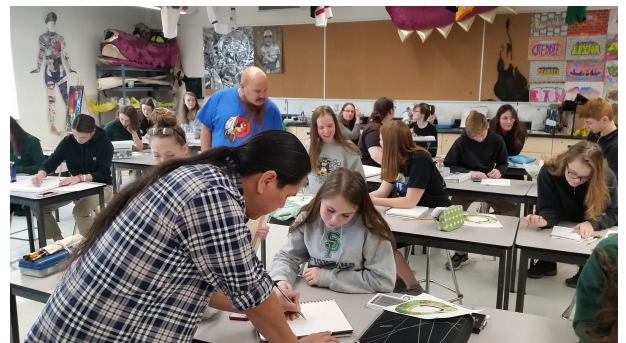
"We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including ... building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect."

## Schools Getting Involved

### Engaging in Storytelling and Building Cultural Awareness

Beginning in December through to early March, classrooms across the St. Clair Catholic District School Board have been learning through story from community partners. Both elementary and secondary schools engaged in learning and many applied their understanding through hands on experiences involving the Arts: Visual Art, Drama, and Music. Through story and responding through the arts, opportunities were created for students to creatively think and to apply their understanding.

Grade 9 and 10 classes in the Arts Department at St. Patrick's Catholic High School worked together with Jeffrey "Red Dog" George and Moses Lunham from Kettle and Stony Point First Nation around the theme of "What's Your Story?". Students learned both the art techniques and the meaning behind the symbolism used in their art work. Moses taught the students that for every blade of grass there is a teaching and, through his art works, he demonstrates that for every brush stroke there is also a teaching. Red Dog taught the students to paint the truth. Through this process, all participants built relationships and reflected deeply on their own lives. *"I had a great time and learned so much. I learned what the images meant and how you can use symbols and colours to tell your story.."* (Student reflection)



All St. Agnes elementary students worked together in grade level sessions while they enjoyed learning through story and music with Cecil, Cedric, and Leigh Ann Isaac from Bkejwanong Territory, Walpole Island First Nation. Cecil, Cedric, and Leigh Ann engaged classes in learning that everyone has a story. The story the Isaac family brings is one of resilience and strength. In the face of the government's actions to strip away culture, language, and identity, Cecil, Cedric, and Leigh Ann remain well rooted in their traditional knowledge and in their community. Through hands on learning, students developed an understanding of the importance and the meaning behind styles of dances, regalia, drumming, and song. After learning through story, students especially enjoyed participating in song and dance together and feeling the heartbeat of mother earth through the beats of the drum. *"This is one way to make our communities stronger, by understanding values of our neighbours, the First Nations People."* (Cedric Isaac)



These schools are two examples of many classrooms, Kindergarten through to Grade 12, that demonstrated a commitment to learning and partnering with the community to build understanding as they integrated learning across the curriculum. To read about more learning opportunities, check out Christ the King's Cultural Activity Day: <http://www.st-clair.net/christ-the-king-catholic-school-partners-with-local-first-nations-communities-to-host-indigenous-cultural-activity-day.aspx>

## Students Have a Voice

The Ursuline College Chatham Secondary Indigenous Student Leadership Group has been committed to engaging in learning from community partners and finding ways to engage their school in learning opportunities throughout the year. This past month, in partnership with Anishinaabe community partners Cecil, Cedric, and Leigh Ann Isaac, and Lenape student engagement partner Celeste Noah, the group participated in drum making and, as they feasted the drums with tobacco and berries, invited grade 11 World Religions classes to participate in learning over two days. On the first day, the classes learned about history and culture and, on the second day, they witnessed the feasting of the drums. As the group awakened the drums, they strengthened their commitment to the group, to their own learning journey, and to build competency across the school. As part of this learning experience, the leadership group took time to reflect and were ready to decide upon their name: Kidwin Zhingwaak 🗣️ (*"Voice of the Pines"*). *"I didn't think I would be able to be a leader in the group like I was today. I would have never thought I could!"*; *"The other students were so respectful and really wanted to learn."* (Student reflections). This leadership group and the St. Patrick's leadership group also partnered with their school's wellness team over this past month to reflect upon barriers students face in their learning and strategies to put into action. Over the next few months, both groups will be putting into action their ideas to create more opportunities for school wide engagement. As a follow up to these conversations and more, please visit the Indigenous Education SCCDSB website for links, resources, community events, and newsletters from this year <https://sites.google.com/sccdsb.net/fnmi/community-connections/newsletters>

