

# Cultural Connections

Special Issue  
June 2009

## Celebrating 2008-2009

### Elementary School Stories

#### Wembley Public School

Natasha Nootchitai, a Grade 8 student from Wembley Public School, represented her school at the Sudbury Regional Historical Fair. She was the proud recipient of the RBC Aboriginal Achievement Award and an Honourable Mention Award. Natasha's project, "Ndoo ansookewin" (My Story), is about discovering a part of her own family history. She learned that she had a famous great-grandfather, Daisia Nebioniquit – former Chief of the Whitefish Lake First Nation, Elder, first Aboriginal male to fight on behalf of Canada in World War II and descendant of every Chief of the Whitefish Lake First Nation.

As Natasha began to research her great-grandfather's accomplishments and life history, she began to unveil her own cultural heritage and pride of the Anishinaabe



teachings. She continues to take an active role in her journey to discovering her own path.



#### C.R. Judd Public School

In April, students at C.R. Judd Public School in Capreol took part in a workshop that traced the roots of Métis and Timiskaming First Nation heritage, including sweet grass rituals and drum making. Mr. Mike Gauthier and Mr. David Stanger shared their Aboriginal experiences through stories and music. The workshop presenters ended the session with a description of how large birch bark canoes were constructed in the early days of Canadian exploration.



Rainbow Schools  
Reaching minds. Touching hearts

### *Little Current Public School*

Students at Little Current Public School enjoyed a nature/medicine walk this spring with their Ojibwe language teachers, Maryann Endanawas and Pearl Waindubence. Students enjoyed learning about medicinal plants and trees and their uses. They also learned about the different types of rocks and how they are used.

On May 22nd, the school hosted its semi-annual Pow Wow, planned with Aundeck Omni Kaning and Sheguindah First Nation communities.

Aboriginal Day celebrations took place on June 19th where events such as an Indian ball, hand drumming, lacrosse, and traditional teachings took place.



### *Jessie Hamilton Public School*

Students in the Grade 5 class at Jessie Hamilton Public School had the opportunity to learn some of the teachings of the medicine wheel from Elder Winnie Pitawanakwat. The students learned to sing the Welcome Song while playing hand drums. The morning finished with the students making their own medicine wheels to take home with them.



### *R.H. Murray Public School Ojibwe (Anishnaabemowin) Class*

The students taking Ojibwe at R.H. Murray Public School participated in two workshops led by facilitators from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (formerly Whitefish Lake First Nation).

Susan Freeland taught students how to make traditional Native shakers from rawhide. Students learned the teachings of the shaker and its significance in Native culture. Shakers

may be used in ceremonial rituals as a dance rattle/shaker or they can accompany the rhythm of the drum. The shakers the students made will be used to accompany hand drumming during their Ojibwe classes.



Frank and Julie Ozwagosh from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek assisted by Linda Heron from Sudbury conducted a second workshop where students learned how to make traditional hand drums, also from rawhide. After the students completed their hand drums a birthing ceremony and feast was held at the school. During the ceremony the students heard the teachings of the hand drum and how to care for and show respect for the hand drum. An invitation was extended to all the parents of the students in the Ojibwe class to attend the ceremony and the feast.

### *Carl A. Nesbitt Public School*

Carl A. Nesbitt Public School celebrated this year by inviting the N'Swakamok Native Dance Troupe to their school in the fall. Students were able to see and learn about the traditional dances of the Anishinaabe people. As part of the dance presentation, students also learned the stories and meaning of the regalia the dancers wore. The dancers invited all students to participate in a circle dance at the end of the session.

## Larchwood Public School

Aboriginal Storyteller Will Morin was invited to share the creation story with the students at Larchwood Public School (photo at right). This was one of the many exciting events that took place at the school during Education Week. In June, Larchwood Public School welcomed the N'Swakamok Dance Troupe for a cultural presentation of music and dance. Mrs. Van Dyk, a teacher at the school, also participated in some of the dancing and wore her regalia. The presentation was enjoyed by students, staff and parents. Following the presentation, the Grade 7/8 class hosted a feast for their guests.

Throughout the school year Mrs. Van Dyk has been sharing her Native teachings and experiences with the Grade 7/8 class. In the fall they began preparing raw deer hide to make different aboriginal crafts such as Native hand drums, shakers, and mini decorative drums. The students had to soak the hide for days, pull the hair off the hide and scrape some of the meat off the hide.

Mrs. Butterfly, a crafter and a teacher, conducted a full day workshop on how to make deer hide shakers. The teachings helped the students develop leadership skills, patience, sewing skills, and organizational skills.

Mrs. Van Dyk and the students also took part in the making of a community Native hand drum. Students helped



to stretch the raw hide, soak, cut and lace up the back of the drum. Students then had to wait patiently for the drum to dry before playing it. Mrs. Kinsella and a couple of students are now discussing ideas for a drum bag and are looking at donating a skirt to carry with the drum.



## Algonquin Public School

Recently, the staff and students of Algonquin Road Public School were given the privilege and opportunity to learn about, participate in, and share in First Nations' culture. Mr. Michael Dashner, a member of the Ojibwe First Nation community, along with his mother Mrs. Riley, explained and performed various native dances. Mrs. Riley is a former professor at Laurentian University and an Ojibwe elder. Performing along with Mr. Dashner and Mrs. Riley were Mr. Dashner's children, Tyler and Nicole Dashner. Tyler is a Grade 3 student and Nicole



is in senior kindergarten at Algonquin. All four members of the family have traveled extensively throughout North America, including Mexico, to showcase their culture and they have won numerous awards for their performances in the United States and Canada. During the performance, students learned about the importance of First Nations' music, ceremonial regalia, and the movements in the dances. Students also learned about some of the important contributions that First Nation people have made to Canada and Northern Ontario. At the end of the performance, students were all able to join in the dancing.

## Monetville Public School

A day of activities focused on Aboriginal culture was held at Monetville Public School in June. The grade 4 students from Kikendawt Kinoomaadii Gamig in the Dokis First Nation were invited to attend the day as well. Staff at Monetville Public School and Dokis First Nation are working together to ensure a smooth transition of students from the First Nation school into Monetville Public School. The workshops included drumming with Kirby Mianskum, bead work crafting with Teresa Restoule and art with Laura Karelse and are part of their transition activities.



## Queen Elizabeth Public School

Queen Elizabeth Public School recognized former Ojibwe language teacher Sarah Gonawabi with a ceremony and the official opening of the school's new outdoor classroom that was named in her honour. Sarah, an Ojibwe teacher in the Rainbow District School Board for about 10 years, passed away last summer. Sarah's daughter and other family members and friends, along with all the staff and students of the school, and Elder's and friends from the Friendship Centre attended the ceremony and the naming of the outdoor space. Sarah was well respected and she believed that education leads to job choices which in turn leads to freedom.



## Secondary School Stories

### N'Swakamok Native Alternative School

Zamanthe Beaudry of the N'Swakamok Native Alternative School participated in the Education Minister's First Student Advisory Council. This council is part of the Speak Up initiative that provides students with the opportunity to advise the Minister of Education on education topics. Zamanthe was one of 1300 students to be chosen

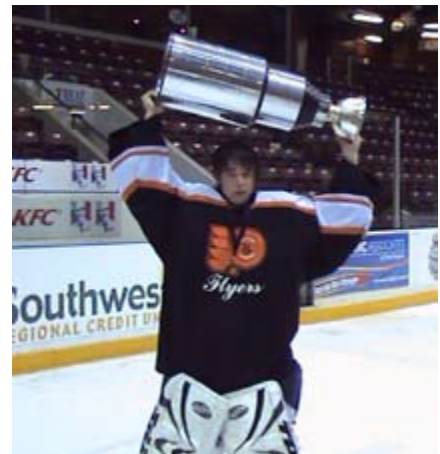


for 60 positions. Zamanthe is also one of three Aboriginal voices in the province on the Council. Their first meeting was this past May in Toronto.

As of February 2009, a new program at the N'Swakamok Native Alternative School was created to increase student success and credit accumulation. The students named their program Wa kendaasijig program (those that want to learn). The integrated English and Native Studies program has been designed to assist 16-18 year old students in achieving two credits by the end of the semester in an alternative setting. Throughout the semester students have participated in activities planned to meet their academic, physical, spiritual and emotional needs. Students in this program have improved their reading and writing abilities by studying and responding to novels, short stories, poetry and media by First Nation authors and artists. They have also participated in such events as the creation of a Medicine Wheel, First Nation crafts, art workshops and community building activities. Students have commented about how this class has assisted them in meeting their academic needs while working in an environment that fosters teamwork. As a class, the students have shared many successes and have developed positive relationships with staff members and each other.

## Lively District Secondary School

Nick Manitowabi is 18 years old and will be participating in the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships for the second year. In addition to playing goalie in the NOHA, AA and A Midget Hockey league for the Nickel Centre Flyers hockey team, Nick is also an honour roll student and is a 2009 graduate from the academic program at Lively District Secondary School. He hopes to pursue a career in law enforcement (his favorite subject) and has accepted an offer to attend Sault College this coming 2009-2010 academic year in the Police Foundations Program. Congratulations Nick!



## Lasalle Secondary School

Students at Lasalle Secondary School with Brian Slegers, Aboriginal Support Worker, established an Aboriginal room at the school. The students painted a mural as part of ongoing efforts to nurture and celebrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit education in Rainbow Schools. Native students visit the Aboriginal room regularly to meet friends, access resources and share their culture and traditions with non-Native students.



## Confederation Secondary School

May 12, 2009 was Confederation Secondary School's first Aboriginal Awareness Day. A dance and drum presentation was performed to seven classes. Students witnessed first class champion dancing and singing and indulged in famous Indian tacos which were a huge hit. Dances that were introduced in the presentation included the Women's Jingle, Women's Fancy, Women's Traditional, Hoop Dance, Men's Grass, Men's Traditional, and Men's Fancy Dance. Lead singer Darren McGregor told the creation story of the Big Drum. The next Aboriginal Awareness Day will be even bigger and have more tacos.

Dan Kataquapit, a Grade 12 Confederation Secondary School student, moved from his reserve in Attawapiskat to attend school in Sudbury. When he first arrived, Dan struggled with attendance, with keeping good grades and getting along with others. Eventually, things started to turn around when he realized he needed school and after he met a special friend. He wanted to do something with his spare time so he joined a local boxing club. He liked this but wanted to start training harder and maybe enter a real fight, so he joined ONTC Top Glove Boxing. Eventually, he entered his first fight in Sault Ste. Marie and won. He was so excited and proud of himself. This young Aboriginal man, with odds against him, turned his life around and found his calling – to finish school and pursue his new passion – boxing. He has had a great support system which includes his girlfriend, support worker and teachers. Dan has just left for his first international competition in Italy, he will be returning on June 17. We will be waiting to find out how he does. Confederation is so happy for him.

## Board Stories

### Aboriginal Youth Education Day

Three hundred students from Rainbow Schools took part in the Northern Aboriginal Festival on Friday, April 3, 2009. They gathered in the foyer at Tom Davies Square where they participated in a variety of activities as part of the new Education Day component of the Festival sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Vale Inco.

Students enjoyed keynote presentations from Waneek Horn-Miller and Doug Bedard (AKA Plex). Waneek is a former Olympic water polo athlete who is currently the Coordinator of the First Peoples' House at McGill University. Waneek was only fourteen as she stood amongst her Nation



in what came to be known as the Oka Crisis. It was at the end of the siege that Waneek was stabbed and struck to the ground by a soldier's bayonet. Plex is a daring emcee, artist and entrepreneur currently living in Toronto. His new CD "Brain Storm" was just released and students had the opportunity to see him perform some of his songs.

Students were also able to participate in cultural workshops and had the opportunity to visit cultural, educational and career related booths. They also saw drummers and dancers perform throughout the day. The day was coordinated by the Rainbow District School Board, Sudbury Catholic District School Board, Laurentian University and Cambrian College.

### Rainbow District School Board's Aboriginal Youth Leadership Group

The Aboriginal Youth Leadership group participated in a series of leadership activities throughout the school year. Representatives from all Rainbow Secondary Schools engaged in the following workshops: Full Esteem Ahead, Hands Across the Border, and Earth Ambassadors. The culminating activity was a day outside at Whitefish Lake First Nation where students learned traditional survival skills, built shelters using only resources from the land, learned how to start a fire and how to make and cook bannock over the fire. Opportunities to continue building on their new leadership skills will be provided next year. Students will be taking on leadership roles in their respective schools.



### Anishinaabemowin – Teg Scholarship Awards

This year, students who take Ojibwe language classes were invited to submit a recording containing a 3 to 5 minute speech on why they feel the Anishinaabe Language is important and ways of learning the language effectively. The speech had to be in the Anishinaabe Language.

Congratulations to our two winners!

**\$100.00**

**Miigwans Pitawanakwat**

A.B. Ellis Public School  
Teacher: Lissa McGregor

**\$75.00**

**Shawnee Commanda'**

Sudbury Secondary School  
Teacher: Roselynda Francis