



Sandy Lake First Nation Exposure Trip 2018

Meeting the goals of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework is a priority for the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario. For the fifth consecutive year, a group of CDSBEO students participated in a service trip to Sandy Lake First Nation in Northwestern Ontario. The trip provides an educational opportunity for students and educators to learn about the challenges of living on an isolated reserve.

This initiative was organized by the department of Religious and Family Life Education, providing the opportunity for new adventures and a chance to build stronger connections between CDSBEO and the Sandy Lake Board of Education. The trip focused deeply on developing a clearer understanding of life in a First Nation community, learning the traditions of the people, and building positive relationships.

Ten CDSBEO students from five secondary schools participated in the experience, which took place in early June 2018.

Described as a life changing journey, students reflected on the most impactful aspects of their experiences, including the adjustment to being geographically isolated and the complications it creates.

The Sandy Lake First Nation is accessible only by plane or winter ice road, and transportation of essential goods such as food, clothing, gas, building supplies, and vehicles is difficult and very expensive.

Hollie Berkers, a student from St. Thomas Aquinas CHS, noted, "Upon our arrival we noticed that transportation, the prices of goods, and the medical issues of the residents, were all impacted by isolation."

"We arrived by plane on a small gravel runway," added Ethan Warnock, also a student from St. Thomas Aquinas. "When we visited the medical centre, we realized that they are not able to treat serious medical issues in Sandy Lake, as they lack the proper facilities and resources. This means that patients must be flown out to the nearest hospital or medical centre for treatment, and citizens only have access to a medical doctor for a limited number of days each year."

"When first arriving to Sandy Lake it was shocking to think that this is the same province that we ourselves live in," explained Berkers.

While reflecting on the challenges faced by the community, the students also realized the importance of community, and the positive morale of the residents of Sandy Lake. Events such as Treaty Days, many outdoor sports activities and games, and experiencing the installation of the first female band chief, imparted the strong sense of community that exists in Sandy Lake. The youth and children of Sandy Lake welcomed the visitors, and the students learned an abundance of lessons, and formed lasting bonds with the youth in the community.



Noah King of Notre Dame CHS provided an overview of the cultural teaching the students witnessed.

"Being in Sandy Lake gave us a chance to experience real culture that our textbooks cannot describe. I was so grateful to be given the opportunity to experience all of these rich cultures first-hand, and to witness how they are passed down through the generations."

Jocelyn Cooper of St. John CHS concluded, "Before Sandy Lake, I prepared myself by attending mass, team meetings, and studying Indigenous life at school. But after the trip I realized that I never could have fully prepared myself for what I was to experience."

Vice-Chair Ron Eamer commended the students, and reflected on the potential of their experience.

"Thank you all for putting yourselves out there and taking the time to learn about Sandy Lake, and their way of life. If two or three of you become involved in helping these communities based on the impact of your experience, and you are able to touch other people with this story, you have the opportunity to truly make your mark on the world."

Orange Shirt Day 2018

For the month of September, schools from across the CDSBEO unpacked age-appropriate learning in regards to the impact of residential schools in Canada, while making connections to our Board theme which focuses on kindness and love. This work supports the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and further helps our students to understand the importance of being holy.

September 30, 2018 marked the 6th Annual Orange Shirt Day in Canada. The day commemorates all those who were forced to go to Residential schools. The orange shirt reflects the story of Phyllis Webstad, who had her new orange shirt taken from her when she arrived at a residential school.

Marian Lawson MacDonald and Scott Stoqua, Indigenous Education Leads with the Board, presented information on how Orange Shirt Day was recognized in CDSBEO schools. The goal of the day was to unpack the learning in a meaningful, age-appropriate way that is respectful to victims, survivors, intergenerational traumatized students, our youngest students, and to the truth.

"It is exciting to share with you the success from our first Orange Shirt Day," began Marian Lawson MacDonald. "Living and sharing our Catholic faith means honouring the Catholic Graduate Expectations, of which social justice is a large part. Orange Shirt Day provides an authentic and meaningful way of working towards social justice in our schools, and in our communities."



In order to ensure thoughtful and effective implementation across the system, a letter to both staff and parents was sent out across the Board with information about the initiative.

"Kits were sent out to every school which unpacked the learning in a scaffolded way for every division," noted Stoqua.

The roll-out of the information and learning was delivered to schools by grade, using culturally appropriate resources and curriculum available in CDSBEO schools. Discussions leading up to the Orange Shirt Day focused on kindness, equity and inclusion, and texts to support learning around residential schools and Truth and Reconciliation.

On September 20, secondary students had an opportunity to hear about the experiences of children in residential schools from local Elder Thomas Louttit. Grade 10 students attended assemblies at their respective schools, and Elder Louttit's story was broadcast live to each location. This impactful account by Louttit, which recalled many difficulties including the day he was taken from his family, demonstrated his resiliency as well as his deep sense of loss for his family and culture. The school community connected with Elder Louttit's story, which planted the seeds for open conversation around reconciliation.

"These shirts, and this initiative has generated so much enthusiasm and support, and we are so pleased that there has been such an outstanding response to receive this worthy initiative. It is not surprising that our students and staff have once again exemplified their enormous capacity for empathy and kindness," concluded Chair Lalonde.

EQAO Assessment Results 2017-2018

On September 19, 2018, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) released to the public, the school and board-level results for the provincial assessments administered during the 2017-2018 school year. These assessments include the Grade 3 and 6 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics; the Grade 9 Applied and Academic Mathematics Assessment and the Grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.

Dawn Finnegan, Principal of Curriculum, presented information to the Board of Trustees on the EQAO results for the 2017-2018 school year. The EQAO assessments provide a snapshot of student literacy and numeracy achievement, and indicators of areas of growth and areas for improvement.

Finnegan began by enforcing the effectiveness of EQAO test results, and how they help to empower educators.

"Norah Marsh, Chief Executive Officer at EQAO, highlights the fact that the assessment results measure one aspect of school effectiveness, namely academic achievement in literacy and math, and should be used with other information to build a full picture of the trends in



student learning. EQAO data helps teachers, administrators, and superintendents to have a clearer understanding of areas requiring additional attention, and an opportunity to celebrate what is working well within the school community.”

“There are so many things to be proud of when looking at CDSBEO’s EQAO results for this past school year,” she continued. “There are a number of areas where our students excelled, and we were thoroughly impressed with the fact that ten of our schools achieved 100 per cent in at least one of area of assessment. CDSBEO met or exceeded the provincial standard in the majority of the assessment categories. Twenty of our elementary schools achieved a score of 90 per cent or above on the writing portion of the assessment. These results speak volumes to the exceptional work being done in CDSBEO schools.”

CDSBEO is continuing to move in the right direction with regard to test results, and schools have shown improvement across the majority of assessment categories, including an impressive 15 per cent jump in Grade 3 Reading, and a 13 per cent increase in Grade 3 Math scores. Both Grade 3 and 6 Writing scores have grown by 6 per cent, while Grade 9 Applied Math scores are up 7 per cent from the previous year.

“We will continue to work on improving the areas for growth within our CDSBEO community, and we will continue to focus on improving achievement in mathematics at the Grade 3, 6, and 9 levels, with particular emphasis on our Grade 6 and 9 students. While our OSSLT results are in line with the provincial average, more work will be done to ensure our students excel in the area of literacy,” concluded Finnegan.

Moving forward, the Board will continue to provide unique and innovative programming to students to enhance literacy and numeracy skills.