

Lakehead Public Schools is committed to the success of every student. As part of our 2015-2018 Strategic Plan we promote the resiliency and well-being of students and staff, we ensure a caring and inclusive learning and working environment, and schools and families are engaged in respectful and reciprocal communications.

We support members of our staff in the honouring of Treaty relationships. Recognizing and honouring historic and modern Treaty relationships is a way to strengthen relationships within the community. Doing this within a school setting, and as a part of programming, emphasizes the importance of Treaty and reconciliation to all staff, students, community members, and parents and guardians. In the document *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, they write, “too many Canadians still do not know the history of Aboriginal peoples’ contributions to Canada, or understand that by virtue of the historical and modern Treaties negotiated by our government, we are all Treaty people. History plays an important role in reconciliation; to build for the future, Canadians must look to, and learn from, the past” (2015b, pg. 8). Honouring Treaty relationships and actively engaging in Indigenous cultural traditions as meaningful and integral parts of school curriculum are a part of strengthening and reconciling relationships in a school community.

When we speak of relationships, reconciliation, and when we acknowledge that we are all Treaty people, we are simultaneously respecting historic relationships and identifying a truth of every citizen of Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada supports this: “whether one is First Nations, Inuit, Métis, a descendant of European settlers, a member of a minority group that suffered historical discrimination in Canada, or a new Canadian, we all inherit both the benefits and obligations of Canada. We are all Treaty people who share responsibility for taking action on reconciliation” (2015b, p. 12). Supporting this facet of Canadian identity is an important part of the education for our students, families, and staff.

Indigenous teachings tell us that all are welcome. In the course of presenting Indigenous-content programming to students, members of the local Indigenous community are regularly a part of schools’ efforts in bringing Indigenous knowledge into classrooms for student learning. This invitation of community into schools has been a long-standing practice of the board. This is also a part of the reconciliation process that strengthens relationships with Indigenous families and community and schools.

Ojibwe teachings suggest that when new knowledge is given and understood, it becomes a responsibility of the learner to pass on this gift of knowledge to others. When a non-Indigenous person embraces the teachings of an Indigenous culture in a good and respectful way, and then shares these teachings with others in a good and respectful way, we acknowledge and celebrate these efforts. Dr. Pamela Toulouse, an Ojibwe/Odawa researcher and educator at Laurentian University, explains that a part of the contribution to the “academic success of Aboriginal students... [are] classroom environments that honour Aboriginal students’ culture, language, world view and knowledge” (Toulouse, pg. 1, 2008). Lakehead Public Schools encourages its teaching staff to incorporate Indigenous perspectives, culture, and language, into their curriculum wherever possible, and provides training and support to its staff to

aid in their efforts to do so. In their Cree-based research, scholars and educators Keith Goulet and Linda Goulet (2014) also support this practice by saying, “successful Indigenous teachers use the Indigenous language and their cultural knowledge to build classroom relationships that encourage children to express themselves in culturally responsive ways. Successful non-Indigenous teachers bring culture into the classroom in a way that shows respect and encourages children to value the current culture and learn about past traditions. Both view Indigenous cultures as rich, vibrant, and diverse. . . . Effective teachers view students, their families, and community members as contributing members of a learning community, not as outsiders” (p. 25). We have seen many instances where schools and staff have encouraged active involvement of families and community members into the school and classrooms so that they have opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences with students. From this involvement , we have seen an increase in student well-being and a strong, welcoming atmosphere within the school that embraces cultural diversity.

References

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