

**Article: Bay Village Coffee Serves Acceptance at Westmount****March 22, 2022**

The local business owners of a popular northside coffee shop, Bay Village Coffee, were welcomed guest speakers yesterday at Westmount Public School. Alan Forbes and Gary Mack were invited by the Grade 8 class to discuss acceptance and positivity in light of the recent vandalism to the coffee shop. The couple and business owners explained that shortly after enduring the damage to the building, they received a hurtful letter of a homophobic nature. The uplifting presentation discussed the community's astounding support and imparted the notion that negative events do not always have to hold harmful outcomes.

A student asked the business owners how they react to hate. Gary Mack believes kindness is the answer. "Dealing with hate with more hate is not a good thing. The best thing to do is be a beacon of love. If you think this world needs more love, give it love. If you think it needs more kindness, be kind. That's what we try to show every day. We try to create a positive environment in a not-always-so positive world."

The class interlaced their business plan projects into the day's event by taking advantage of the presence of entrepreneurs. The students asked business related questions and discussed commerce, competition, and the importance of a good product. "When you're thinking about the business that you're creating, how do you want your business to make a difference? How do you want people to feel about your business? Is it possible to make a living and make a difference at the same time? I say yes and it is really important," said Mack.

Earlier this year, the front door to Bay Village Coffee was shattered in a break-in. The business owners resolved to rise above the offense and transform the tool used to cause the damage – a large rock – into a work of art. The painted rock was donated to the Our Hearts at Home campaign to be auctioned off to raise money for the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation to support cardiovascular care in the Northwest.

Lakehead Public Schools fosters an environment of acceptance and inclusion in all its schools. Creating and maintaining an atmosphere of belonging for all students and staff is of utmost importance and continues to be one of the Board's strategic plan goals.