



REPORT

Recognition of Excellence

***Mine Centre School
Early Years' Camp***



RAINY RIVER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Early Years' Camp Mine Centre School

Date: April 5, 2016
To: Trustees
From: Barbe Dennis
Principal- Mine Centre School

Recommendation: It is recommended that the report be received for information only.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The RRDSB Strategic Plan highlights purposeful learning as a pillar for student success.

- The strengths and needs of our earliest learners are identified to ensure the foundation of their success.
- The unique historical and cultural story of our Aboriginal community is embedded in the curriculum.

CONTEXT

"Ontario's education system will prepare students with the knowledge, skills, perspectives and practices they need to be environmentally responsible citizens. Students will understand our fundamental connections to each other and to the world around us through our relationship to food, water, energy, air, and land, and our interaction with all living things. The education system will provide opportunities within the classroom and the community for students to engage in actions that deepen this understanding."

Ontario Ministry of Education, *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow: A Policy Framework for Environmental Education in Ontario Schools* (2009a)

SUMMARY

Learning in the outdoors has always been an important part of the Kindergarten program at Mine Centre School. Classes have traditionally taken advantage of our location to explore and investigate environments such as the pond habitat that lies just east of the school or the stream near Bad Vermillion Lake. Classes have followed the seasons on class walks, observing seasonal change in the weather, in plants and in animals. This year, the Early Years team has taken outdoor learning to a new level by developing an outdoor classroom, as part of the Early Years program. "Camp", as the children call it, is a small clearing located just down the road, a short walking distance from Mine Centre School.



In the fall, teacher, Marjorie Hale, chose a spot that would become the home base for many an outdoor adventure. Ms. Hale believed that her students would benefit from time spent outdoors, playing and learning together. She enlisted the help of Gail Jones, Cultural Co-coordinator for Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation, in developing a long range plan for this inquiry based, experiential learning project. The plan included activities focused on learning what cyclic seasonal changes happen in our natural environment; learning names of local animals and plants in Ojibway; learning how to use simple tools and materials such as magnifiers, snowshoes, small shovels and diggers; and learning to appreciate and give thanks to Mother Earth for all she provides.

Throughout the lessons, children are encouraged to investigate open ended questions, to explore, to observe, and to collect items of inquiry. They are encouraged to play, to build, to experiment and to test their ideas together. They are encouraged to learn about nature through their senses: listening, watching, smelling and touching nature around them. The children are discovering that being outside is a healthy activity for the body, mind and spirit.

The Early Years class has been visiting their outdoor classroom once a week, participating in a wide variety of activities that are connected to all areas of the curriculum and are often rich in the Ojibwe language and culture. Students, and teachers, come back to the school refreshed, calm and ready to expand upon their experiences through shared writing activities, individual drawing and storytelling activities and real world math problems that are a result of their explorations. The Early Years team have observed the children developing a sense of wonder about their environment and a personal connection to the earth and this special place that they call “Camp”.

ROUTING

SPT/Senior Administration	April 5, 2016
Board	April 5, 2016
