

## Aaniin Nigakendaamaan noongom?

### Students learn the meanings behind First Nations dances



Crossroads School

First Nations dancers performed for students and described the intricacies of several First Nations dances. Traditionally, grass dancers flattened the grass for other dancers before a Pow Wow. Their dance mimics the grass – whatever is done on the right, is done on the left, like the swaying grass. Since women are traditionally the keepers of the earth, they always have one foot on the ground while they dance so that they are connected to the earth. Shawl dancers mimic the butterfly. The jingle dress came from an Elder who had a dream about a healing dress that was designed to sound like bull rushes in the wind. The jingle dress is used when the dancing is meant to heal, and is recognized as an honourable dress to wear.

### Medicine Wheel at high school's front entrance

A Medicine Wheel, located at the front entrance of Fort Frances High School, was the culminating activity of the Grade 9-10 Math Class. Prior to the completion of the Medicine Wheel, an Elder visited the classroom to speak to students about this structure, as this will be a sacred area. He spoke of the Medicine Wheel's history and stated that it starts from the east and moves toward the south. The circle of life is represented within the Medicine Wheel and as there is life within that circle, it should be feasted – especially in the spring and again in the fall.



### Bullying Prevention Initiatives

A number of Rainy River District School Board initiatives, programs and strategies are in place to create a learning environment where everyone feels welcome and respected. The School Board recognizes Ontario Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week with students and school staff engaged in various activities throughout the week to learn more about bullying and its effect on student learning and well-being. The Board's Character Education curriculum helps students to understand, to care about, and to act upon core ethical values. Student mentorship and mediation programs build leadership and conflict management skills. Me to We activities and events inspire and empower students to make their schools and communities a better place by starting a positive chain reaction. Diversity and inclusiveness training, such as Egale has been received by many of the School Board's staff members to remove discrimination and stigma and to provide support so that all persons can achieve their full potential. In partnership with the Ontario Provincial Police, the Respect Technology program promotes digital citizenship and helps children recognize and prevent online risks.

A new teaching tool to assist with bullying prevention and awareness was launched in April 2013 by the Rainy River District School Board. "Just Call Me Lucille" is a book co-written by Mike Parkhill, who has worked with the School Board on the MERL initiative (Modernizing, Expanding, Revitalizing Language). It teaches about the role of the bully, the role of the victim and the role of the bystander. The book is written in both Ojibwe and English, incorporating cultural teachings passed down by Elders.

## Miigwech



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## Aaniin Nigakendaamaan noongom?

What did I learn today? – First Nation, Métis and Inuit education highlights from the 2012-13 school year

### First Nation and Métis histories and cultures are being injected into the curriculum

The revised curriculum has provided teachers with many new opportunities to enrich teaching and learning in schools through the introduction of Aboriginal themes, topics and perspectives. Expectations are being incorporated into many areas of the elementary and secondary curriculum to help teachers bring First Nation and Métis histories, cultures and perspectives into the classroom. The Rainy River District School Board fosters community involvement with the help of education counselors, artists, authors, Elders, parents and other professionals for schools to contact as resources. The Board's Aboriginal Curriculum Coordinator has been providing teachers with cultural resources and lessons for students from Early Learning/Kindergarten through to Grade 12. The Coordinator taught the history of snowshoeing to students in many of our schools, and completed the lessons by participating in a snowshoeing activity along with students and educators. In partnership with Sunset Country Métis, the Coordinator presented lessons on Métis history, culture and dance with students having the opportunity to practice their Métis jigging skills. The Coordinator also visited the United Native Friendship Centre to teach the making of dream catchers. The Board's Aboriginal Early Learning Liaison work focuses on establishing links between Aboriginal communities, schools, parents, and children within the context of the Early Learning Program.



Robert Moore School



Robert Moore School

Fall 2013

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### Aboriginal Education web page

A dedicated web page featuring Aboriginal Education is available on the Rainy River District School Board's website at [www.rrdsb.com](http://www.rrdsb.com). The web page includes a dictionary that the Elders are contributing to, a map of our First Nations communities and a summary of their history, an Ojibwe word of the day, Ask an Elder YouTube videos, and the web page continues to be further developed.





## Summer Literacy Learning Program



Robert Moore School

The 2013 Summer Literacy Learning Program was a tremendous success. This year, it was held at three schools of the Rainy River District School Board – Donald Young, Robert Moore, and Mine Centre – for two weeks during the month of July. A total of 71 students participated in this program led by qualified teachers. Its goal is to provide students with the opportunity to work on their literacy skills in a relaxed and fun environment. Based on recommendations from the School Board’s staff, the Ministry of Education decided to include a First Nations Métis Inuit (FNMI) component to the Summer Literacy Learning Program. At the September 2013 meeting of the Rainy River District School Board, Aboriginal Education Leader Brent Tookenay highlighted the success of the program, and commended the First Nations communities for the logistics to transport the students to Mine Centre School.

## Aboriginal student achievement data

The gap between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal achievement on the Grade 3 Reading Assessment and the Grade 3 Writing Assessment has narrowed considerably. The 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 cohorts of students improved in their reading achievement as measured by the Grade 3 EQAO and then Grade 6 EQAO Reading Assessments, with the 2011-2012 Grade 6 cohort improving by 26 percentage points in Reading and by 5.5 percentage points in Writing. The 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 cohorts saw increases in the percentage points of students achieving Level 3 or higher on the Grade 9 Applied/Academic Math from Grades 6 to 9, of 10.5 percentage points and 3 percentage points respectively. The OSSLT results saw each cohort for the last four years improve in overall reading and writing achievement on average by 21 percentage points. A cohort of students from 2008-2009 who were 31% successful in the EQAO Grade 3 Reading Assessment, improved to achieving a success rate of 81% in the 2011-2012 EQAO Grade 6 Reading Assessment. As of April 2013, data revealed that Métis students were achieving at the same or above the level of all students in credit accumulation.

These increases can be attributed to the School Board’s focus on oral language, on a balanced literacy program and dedicated literacy block within the school schedule, and intensive supports for students at-risk, such as Reading Recovery. To focus on supports for numeracy achievement, the School Board has specialized teachers, such as a Kindergarten to Grade 12 Math Coach and a Kindergarten to Grade 6 Numeracy Facilitator, to promote collaborative inquiry and co-teaching strategies.

## Local high school student honoured at Northwestern Ontario Aboriginal Youth Achievement & Recognition Awards

In May 2013, Cristian Windego, Fort Frances High School student, was honoured at the Northwestern Ontario Aboriginal Youth Achievement & Recognition Awards ceremony, held in Thunder Bay, in the category of Community Leadership & Volunteerism. He was recognized for his voluntary work at Rainy River First Nations events, for the support of his peers at school, and for exceeding his duties at his Rainy River First Nations summer job where he regularly goes over and above what is expected.



## David Bouchard visits to schools

During the week of September 17, 2012, David Bouchard, Order of Canada recipient and Métis author, educator, and public speaker, visited schools of the Rainy River District School Board and spoke at public sessions held in Atikokan, Mine Centre, Fort Frances, and Rainy River. His visit was sponsored by the School Board’s Parent Involvement Committee. In speaking to parents, David emphasized the importance of parent support, interest and involvement in children’s education, especially with respect to developing literacy. He encouraged parents and students to be proud of their heritage, and to embrace their culture.



Crossroads School

## Fern Perkins visits to schools



Fort Frances High School

Pioneer Player, Fern Perkins, is a descendant of the Métis Hudson’s Bay Company fur trade family. She visited schools of the Rainy River District School Board to share her story about the Métis history of this area and to speak about the life of her ancestor, Isabella Mainville, who lived in the District in the early 1800s.

## Residential Schools sessions for school leadership

School leadership attended professional development sessions to learn about the impact on First Nations communities as a result of Residential Schools. The sessions were held in May 2013, and were presented by Glen Jourdain, Dick Bird and Don Jones.

## Native Second Language

Through a partnership between the Rainy River District School Board, Seven Generations Education Institute, the Ministry of Education, Mike Parkhill of SayItFirst, and First Nations communities, work is being done to revitalize and restore Native language. The work is ongoing, creating resources and strategies for the delivery of Native language.

The Board’s Native Language Coordinator, Jason Jones, has helped create the Ojibwe Language Reverse Engineering Project, which aids in teaching the structure of Ojibwe language. It facilitates learning by deconstructing sentences using online tools in order to listen to the sentence pronunciation, introduce its written format, and gain understanding through analysis of the individual word’s description or cultural meaning.

The School Board’s Aboriginal Education edublog allows parents to submit common sentences for translation, and also offers quizzes and other resources for anyone interested in learning the Ojibwe language. To explore and participate in language learning with their children, parents can download these translations to any device.

Ojibwe is offered as a second language course beginning in Grade 4 at Crossroads, Donald Young, J. W. Walker, and Robert Moore elementary schools; beginning in Kindergarten at Mine Centre elementary school; and at the secondary level at Fort Frances High School. In April 2013, Native Second Language students from eight elementary schools from across the District participated in Gagwegakendamaawiziwin (also known as Quest for Knowledge), a competition that tests students’ understanding of the Ojibwe language. The 2013 competition was held at the Naicatchewenin gymnasium.

