



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

School Board: Rainbow District School Board

Contact Person and Email Address: Kathy Dokis (dokisk@rainbowschools.ca)

Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Deepening Indigenous Worldviews

Our team was comprised of: Laura Young, Kara Farrel-Menard, Lindsay Samson, Monica Mejaki, Ramona Shawana and Jennifer Hearn.

Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1szf7ANCe5YY35b68OfvgBUnZ3fHri9cd3qVe9oB8PXY/edit?usp=sharing>

Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

The focus is on practices that excite, engage and increase student confidence, achievement and well-being. In the brief description please provide answers to the following questions: Where the program/initiative/strategy is delivered (school/board locations)? Who is responsible for delivering and monitoring the program/initiative/strategy? Who is the target audience? Are there any community partnerships involved? Are there any staffing or budget implications? Are there any special resources required? What are your indicators of success, etc.?

In collaboration with Indigenous community partners, families and agencies, Rainbow Schools has offered many opportunities for staff and students to learn more about Indigenous worldviews at Queen Elizabeth Public School. We wanted to focus on creating a community of understanding so that children are valued and respected which has a direct impact on well-being and achievement.

Our journey began with a beading club with the intention of providing students with a social environment where they would have the opportunity to learn a new skill as well as build relationships with one another.

A cultural day was planned to provide staff and students with the opportunity to learn about Indigenous history, culture and traditions. When understandings are built, one is then able to cultivate and maintain respectful relationships with each other.

In partnership with N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre, a "Young Warriors" program was offered to all students which focused on traditional teachings and Indigenous inspired daily physical fitness.

We engaged in a book study, "I Am Not A Number" written by Indigenous author Jenny Kay Dupuis. All students from grades 3-6 engaged with the true story about Canada's Residential Schools and were given the freedom to express their thinking through the arts. Student art

pieces communicated their disbelief and sadness about this dark part of Canadian history. Our school hosted a visit by Author Jenny Kay Dupuis in a community event where student work was available for public viewing in a gallery.

What has been the impact on Student Learning?

As we reflect on our experiences this year, we noticed how much more Anishinaabe our students are speaking to one another. The fact that students are proud of the language really celebrates a change in culture at our school.

We worked together this year to transform our school to reflect the values and culture of those present. A safe place was created for Indigenous children, so much so that a student said, *"It was fun because I got to use the grandfather drum, I got to play it a lot. I was born Ojibwe, I just never told anyone."*

The Principal of the school responded to the cultural day by saying, *"The opportunity for all students to experience Aboriginal culture from those who know it best was invaluable. Students were thrilled about what they saw and what they heard. The amount of attention paid by the students was a testament to what kids value, they value culture."*

Reading the book, "I am Not A Number" helped students from all cultural backgrounds gain an understanding of the history of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people over Canada's history. Hearing our children discussing concepts such as racism showed how deeply they connected with the story. Many students went home and discussed with their families, meanwhile, other children shared that they lost sleep as they continued to think about the impact of residential schooling.

By providing these rich opportunities for our students, we are allowing students to take part in our shared journey towards reconciliation.