



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

School Board: Moose Factory Island District School Board

Contact Person and Email Address: Betty Gunner, FNMI Lead

Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Enhancing Cree Language with Culture (ECLC)

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

Attachments: Cree Cycle of Seasons and ECLC Templates

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.?

The First Nation language focus in our Board this year began with a commitment to base all programming on the Omushkego Cree cycle of life. The school's Cree language program is enriched with two periods per week of cultural activities that reinforce and augment students' learning of their language. Knowledge keepers, elders and community resource people are invited into the school to share their cultural knowledge, skills and traditional teachings with students from kindergarten to grade eight. The learning is hands-on and the acquisition of language is enhanced through students' shared experiences in the classroom, the community and on the land. Cultural teachings include beading and sewing, cooking traditional foods, stories and legends, native art, trapping and fur preparation, soap carving, moss bags and tikanagans, traditional teachings in a teepee, step-dancing, and hand drum-making.

Combining the acquisition of language with cultural activities that encourage and boost its retention is a natural and effective way to engage and teach our First Nations students. Furthermore, sound planning, active involvement and consistent collaboration between all

stakeholders: school administrators, teaching staff and community members, has facilitated the development of an effective working model to use as the basis for the continued integration of the Cree culture and traditions in the language programming. An ongoing commitment to provide the necessary monetary and staff resources must be made, however, to support this successful initiative.

What has been the impact on Student Learning?

We have found the decision to follow the Omushkego cycle of life in the Cree language program to be culturally responsive, not only to our children, but also to the parents and the community. The shared experiences and building of relationships have been valued and appreciated by the students, staff, families and community members. These outcomes have been confirmed by the positive feedback from several surveys conducted throughout the year.

Significantly, there has been an enhanced sense of cultural identity among our students, as well as positive student engagement and a noticeable decrease in disruptive behaviours during native language programming time.