



## Exemplary Environmental Leadership/Sustainability Program or Initiative

School Board: Rainy River District School Board

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Name of Program/Initiative: \_\_\_\_\_

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

<http://marmour66.wix.com/environmental-film-festival>

### Description of Program/Initiative

The Rainy River District School Board's schools have participated and continue to participate in several projects to engage students in their learning, especially in creating healthy, environmentally conscious schools, while developing leadership in students.

#### Board wide Projects:

During the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, Environmental Film Festivals took place for students across the Board, whether creating their own films promoting the care of the environment or watched National award winning films promoting environmental awareness. Donald Young, Nestor Falls and Crossroads School also each held their own school based Environmental Film Festivals to celebrate Earth Day.

The Board has partnered with the Rainy River District Stewardship Council in school based projects such as Canoe Route Mapping, Tree Planting and the Urban Forestry Inventory. In total, more than 3,400 trees have been planted on school grounds in the Rainy River District. At Fort Frances High School, 72 trees were planted with the school continuing to monitor the growth of the 72 trees, using technology to assist them. The tree planting was documented by groups naming each tree and keeping a list and photo of the students who planted the tree. Smart codes will be placed on each tree, making it possible for someone to scan the code with a smart phone to see who and when the tree was planted, with the work to integrate the growth of these trees into data management classes by tracking the growth and health of the trees over the years. Partners included parent volunteers, MNR, Honeywell, Jeffries Nurseries, North American Lumber, Darryl's Landscaping, Fort Frances Power Corporation, Lion's Club, and the Sportsman's Club.

In addition, annually students participate in the Challenge, a young men's conference focused on developing leadership skills within students. As part of the learning over the two days, students learn basic canoeing skills, basic knots, shelter building using tarps and rope, basic GPS navigation, and "on-the-water" rescue techniques. In addition, students are treated to a hands-on presentations such as on local aquatic life by a Ministry of Natural Resources biologist.

#### School based Projects:

Schools throughout the District participate in local activities supporting environmental education. Some examples include the following:

School based projects such as worm composting and the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up take place annually within District schools. Crossroads School, Donald Young School, Fort Frances High School, Nestor Falls School, North Star School, Rainy River High School and Riverview School are currently worm composting, after receiving funding to start bins in their schools. Both Riverview and Crossroads school were awarded World Wildlife fund awards in 2012 to purchase equipment to start worm composting.

Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up is an ongoing event for J. W. Walker School and Donald Young School, with assistance from time to time from secondary students from Fort Frances High School. This school-based event involves students and staff along with volunteers working together to eliminate waste/garbage found along the local Rainy River.

A Fort Frances High School teacher, worked with his Geomatics class in 2012-13 and the Rainy River District Stewardship Council to map a canoe route on Google Maps. Similar work with the Ontario Provincial Police through a student project helped to identify areas within the District where increased traffic collisions occurred due to animals crossing the highways. As a result of this work, new signage was situated to warn drivers of the potential for accidents, thus reducing motor collisions and preserving the local wildlife.

In 2012, Donald Young School began work on raising awareness of the plight of the pine marten. The Grade 7/8 class of Donald Young School in cooperation with and support of the staff and students from the Rainy River High School, were given the task of creating a t-shirt design that would make people more aware of the plight of the pine marten. Students transferred the logo onto t-shirts using a silk screen process at the Rainy River High School. The students then constructed over twenty pine marten nesting boxes with the help of staff and students from the Rainy River High School. The nesting boxes were transported to Nestor Falls School where staff, students, and parents distributed the boxes throughout the community of Nestor Falls. One pine marten box has been placed behind Donald Young School and situated with a 'critter cam' to monitor the activity.

For the past 50 years, Atikokan High School has offered the Outers Program which involves wilderness experiences where students learn basic paddling skills and canoe rescue, navigation, and campfire and shelter-building skills. AHS Outers Program is part of the school's Specialist High Skills Major program, with many students completing additional certification to receive a designation on their diploma. Most recently, Rainy River High School has offered a version of Outers. Both programs involve unique cultural and conservation learning and link students with the Ministry of Natural Resources to enable students to successfully complete expeditions in fall, winter, and spring. Both programs demonstrate how environmental education is integrated into the students' learning.

Most recently, Fort Frances High School has partnered with the Ministry of Natural Resources for the installation of a weather station on the school grounds. The information gathered at this station will assist MNR in predicting possible forest fires. All data collected will be also displayed on a unit within the high school to use within several courses. The ability to collect real-time data is also an initiative that has been ongoing with such projects as the J. W. Walker School solar wall monitoring project (<http://solarwall.com/monitoring/?loopname=jwwalker&units=imperial>)

For all of the above projects, the main cost associated with the projects has been student transportation. Other costs include project materials such as wood for marten boxes.

#### What has been the Impact on Student Learning?

In all of the above examples, students learn that they can truly make a difference in protecting the environment. Whether completing activities such as composting, school grounds and shoreline cleanup, bringing litterless lunches to school, recycling, or tree planting, or creating and sharing information to promote a greater environmental awareness throughout the community, the students learn the difference they can make and how we all have the responsibility to make that difference.