



September 2023 Indigenous Liaison Committee (ILC) Report for Grand Bend Public School

At Grand Bend Public School we are still in the process of developing our School Learning Plan Goal for Indigenous Education (including Truth and Reconciliation Commitments) for the 2023-2024 school year. Last year our goal was to continue to access LKDSB resources and personnel to increase and embed their understanding of Indigenous culture, traditions, perspectives and history (particularly of the local area) and embed it in the curriculum.

Our school community continues to engage in a number of the activities and lessons provided by the LKDSB Indigenous Education Team in the lead up to Truth & Reconciliation Week, the National Day of Truth & Reconciliation & Orange Shirt Day. We have also connected with LKDSB FNMI Student Support Worker, Kim George who checked in about our FNMI students and how she can help and provide support.

Some of the next steps that students and staff at Grand Bend Public School are going to undertake are:

One of our FDK classes has been talking about the meaning of Orange Shirt Day. They are going to decorate a picture of an orange shirt that reads "Every Child Matters" and complete the sentence "I matter because ...". The class are also going to listen to traditional Indigenous music and singing and will view some examples of traditional Indigenous dances.

Our other FDK class will be reading the story "Amik Loves School" by Indigenous author Katherena Vermette. They will use the message in the book to talk about what they love about school and what celebrations they love to celebrate with their families. They are also planning to talk about how they feel when at school and participating in celebrations and traditions. The class will then try and imagine what it would feel like if the things that they love and are important to them and their families were taken away. They will also talk about how this relates to the Indigenous children who attended residential schools and what it must have felt like for them, while discussing Phyllis Webstad and her orange shirt. After, the class will create their classroom promise chart by brainstorming things they can say or do to make sure that everyone always feels safe, welcome and cared for in their classroom and the school. The students and staff will then sign their names to the chart in orange and hang it in their classroom for the remainder of the school year as a reminder of the promises that they made to each other to create a safe environment for everyone.

The Grade 1 class are going to use the story "When We Were Alone" to discuss what residential schools were. They are also going to learn about Phyllis Webstad and what her experience was. Afterwards, they are going to connect with their learning buddies and listen to their presentation regarding the collective art piece that they have created and then make orange shirts and forget-me-not flowers to add to it. The class will also be using the student-made calendar resource from Nicole Gooding to discuss and learn about the corn moon as part of their Seasonal Changes science unit and then will be referring back to this each month.

Our Grade 1/2 class are planning to read "The Orange Shirt Story" and discuss how the students would have felt. They will also explore the books "With Our Orange Hearts" and "We All Count" and practice counting together from one to ten in Ojibwe. They will also continue learning the Ojibwe word of the week that is displayed each day on our school-wide virtual announcements.

During the month of September, one of our Grade 3/4 classes has been talking about the importance of sharing/community circles. They read the story "The Sharing Circle" written by Indigenous author, Theresa Larson-Jonasson. While reading this book, the students learned the history and importance of Sharing Circles to the First Nations peoples. They also learned that during a Sharing Circle that everyone needs to listen with attention and speak with intention. Once a question has been asked and the circle started, only the person holding the talking piece should talk and the rest of the circle should listen. The class have been using Sharing Circles and the students have learned quite a bit about each other during them.

In Grade 4/5, the students will be learning about the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day. They will also learn about some of the 140 residential schools that existed in Canada, and how that led to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and an apology from the federal Government of Canada. The class will also be participating in some of the Virtual Education Program for Grades 1-12 from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

The Grade 6/7 class completed an Orange Shirt Day Art Collaboration as a reflective activity. Each student was given a brown paper bag that was filled with various items. Students completed each specific instruction which allowed each item to be created with intent, purpose, and connection. Each item completed represented one child. The class then kept track of the number of children represented as they completed each item. The items were gathered into a bigger bag which represented the residential school system taking the children from their community, families, culture and traditions. The activity prompted a conversation about cultural appropriation versus cultural appreciation and about what they can do as a classroom community to take steps towards greater understanding and respect of Indigenous history and culture.

Our Grade 7 class will be viewing videos on the origins of Orange Shirt Day and having discussions surrounding residential schools, the importance of "Every Child Matters", inclusion, reconciliation and empathy.

The Grade 8 class are continuing to broaden their understanding of the impact of colonization and more specifically residential schools. Recently, the class has begun learning about the National Truth and Reconciliation Committee's "94 Calls to Action". Students are, each, researching one of the calls to action. They are focusing on reframing the information in a way that is accessible to all. They are thinking critically and brainstorming ways they think that we can achieve these calls to action, as a community and as a nation in order to move towards reconciliation. Their next step is to share the 94 Calls to Action with the school community to keep the dialogue going.

We are looking forward to the next steps in our learning as we continue to understand the truth as we move toward reconciliation. We look forward to continuing our journey, and we invite you to join us.

