



## Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program Update

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, through the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) and Experiential Learning, has made significant changes to the delivery mode of some of its programs in response to COVID-19 restrictions. The change to virtual learning has created many new exciting opportunities for these programs.

The goal of the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program has been to promote skilled trades as a viable and attractive alternative to traditional post-secondary programs. OYAP program participation has risen, and more students are choosing this pathway and will receive the benefits associated with apprenticeships and education placements.

Dan Lortie, OYAP Coordinator, presented information to the Board on the upcoming program virtual events, and how learning opportunities have changed for students.

"For obvious reasons the year, the annual SKLZ competition at St Lawrence College, which featured over 300 students in 17 competition area cannot take place," explained Lortie. "To fill the void, CDSBEO OYAP introduced the Backyard Challenge for 2020-2021. The year-long competition challenges participating schools to choose one of two shed designs to build and submit quarterly video reports on progress."

Schools have full autonomy to decide the finishes, with the goal of selling the finished product for profit, which would in turn be donated toward the school technology programs for equipment, maintenance, or repairs. In some cases, schools have decided to donate the profits.

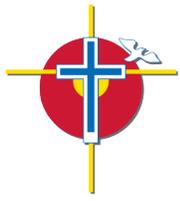
"The students at Notre Dame Catholic High School have teamed up with their MEP (special education) program, and will be modifying the shed to create a functional greenhouse that the school will be able to use for years to come."

Currently, both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (which funds OYAP), are working with school boards to target grade 7 and 8 students to encourage pathways to the skilled trades. One initiative this year to engage students in grades 7 and 8, is the OYAP Race Car Challenge.

"Over 1200 kits were sent out to schools across the board which included teacher resources with information on OYAP, the Specialist High Skills Major program, and Experiential Learning opportunities."

CDSBEO OYAP has also launched a social media presence, to help highlight and feature students who have successfully followed the OYAP path to a successful career outcome, in addition to events and opportunities for students.

Mr. Lortie noted a few other events which will be held this year including the Women in Trades virtual event on February 17, a Virtual Career Fair for Prescott-Russell schools in March, and



two additional skilled trades information sessions in April featuring available learning opportunities, career pathways, and why working in the skilled trades is a viable career option.

“Mr. Lortie, thank you as always for providing us with a valuable overview on what opportunities are available to our students,” concluded Chair Lalonde. “You are certainly a champion for our students and for helping to promote these exceptional programs through your expertise.”

## Indigenous Education Theme: Skyworld – We Come from the Stars

CDSBEO Indigenous Education, through the support of the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, is in the middle of a three-year plan to support integration of Indigenous perspectives and worldview through yearly themes. In 2019-2020, the theme was Spirit of Water, and in 2020-2021, the theme is Skyworld: We Come from the Stars.

To support this theme, K-12 resources have been shared to decolonize the night sky for our students and staff. A virtual Indigenous Education Day presentation is being planned on May 5th, during Catholic Education Week in culmination of this learning. This event will also focus on efforts to integrate protocols and teachings from time immemorial into a virtual, on-line world in a culturally safe, and relevant way.

Marian Lawson MacDonald, Indigenous Education Coordinator and Celine Langevin, Indigenous Education Consultant, presented information to the Board on the learning taking place in CDSBEO schools through initiatives, resources, and community partners which is guided by the 2020-2021 theme.

“Decolonizing education is about telling the stories and the history of this land called Turtle Island, from the perspective of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. When we diversify materials, curriculum and assessment, we teach and reach, all students,” explained Marian Lawson MacDonald.

Decolonized education is rooted in connections to place and place-based education. This year, the CDSBEO Indigenous Education team will decolonize the night sky through resources that highlight the magic of each month based on what is prominent at that time. Schools have received packages that are easily accessible in the virtual classroom and in person.

“In October, we learned that the big dipper is really The Great Bear. November taught us that Makinak is the Cree word for Turtle, which lights up the November sky. We celebrated the quiet of the winter solstice in December. And last month, in January, we looked into the southeast sky after sunset and found Wesakechak, pointing the way to the 7 Sisters,” noted Langevin.



During the month of February, classrooms across CDSBEO will feature Matootisan - the story of the sweat lodge.

Wilfred Buck, one of the foremost Indigenous star-story experts in the world, is a science facilitator at the Manitoba First Nations Education Centre (MFNEC). He is tasked with developing science and astronomy curricula for local schools; to create his lessons, he uses the knowledge shared with him by Elders and others, imparted during ceremonies and sweat lodges to teach students to look at the stars from a Cree perspective.

"We are very excited to announce that on Indigenous Education Day, Wilfred Buck has agreed to virtually present many of his star stories to the CDSBEO! This will be our way of collecting the star stories of the year and bringing them together," explained Lawson MacDonald.

Langevin noted that this school year is the first that all grade 11 students will participate in the Contemporary First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Voices English course. Reflecting on student feedback on the course, Langevin notes, "Change is often difficult, but we are happy that students have grown to appreciate this new curriculum. The impact of this change is noted by the student's comments when he says: I think everyone needs to take this class. I think it's really important. I think we did the right thing here."

To further support the curriculum, the Board will also host the first annual CDSBEO Indigenous Art and Writing Contest in the spring.

"Teachers have been inquiring about available contests and so we have decided to host our own."

"We are so proud of the great initiatives that you are leading for students in our Board. I know that you have done amazing work, and that you have developed wonderful relationships with all of our Indigenous community partners," concluded Chair Lalonde.