



JANUARY · PENAMUJUIKU'S · JANVIER 2021



REGIONAL UPDATE

Monthly Newsletter of the South Shore Regional Centre for Education

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Above: at art celebration by North Queen's GSA.

Commitment to Culture at NQCS

A variety of initiatives bring school & community closer

North Queens Community School has made a commitment to culture and diversity and is a shining example of how those ideals can create change when put into action. The rural school is located in Caledonia and is home to approximately 235 students from pre-primary to grade twelve.

Ruth Amiro has been the principal at NQCS since September 2019 and says the goal of the administrative team is to create and promote an environment where every student and staff member can see themselves reflected in their school environment. "Students and staff deserve to feel they have an impact on their work/learning environment and that they are valued," she says.

There are a variety of recent initiatives happening to promote inclusion and diversity at NQCS. Here are a few examples, however it's important to note that these are only highlights. Their lists of projects and ideas is long.

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Diversity Shines at NQCS

Land-based Learning Program

NQCS is developing a land-based learning program by connecting students to the natural environment in order to enhance learning experiences. Amiro says this addresses diversity and inclusion by providing students with hands-on experiences outside of a traditional classroom. NQCS is one of only a few schools in the province to offer this program and is in the second year of development.

The activities in the land-based learning program are focused on indigenous education, specifically Mi'kmaq teachings. Some examples of land-based learning activities include: canoeing, cranberry picking, fleshing, stretching, monitoring of at risk species at Keji & at the Wildcat community, construction of a traditional wikuom, and tree identification.

This fall, students also had an opportunity to dry a moose hide and make a traditional Mi'kmaw drum. "This hide was donated to the school by one of our families in the Wildcat Community," says Amiro. "This was a student-lead initiative and involved NQCS students and staff meeting with elders from the community to learn how to skin and dry the hide."

Listening Together

Another part of the land-based learning program, is a program called Listening Together. "The goal of this project is to install audio recording devices in the forest surrounding the Wildcat community to capture the sounds of local birdlife in order to confirm the presence of certain species," says Amiro.

The nesting and feeding patterns of three birds will be studied, the grey jay, the northern saw-whet owl and the barred owl. The program draws inspiration from a Mi'kmaw legend, *Muin and the Seven Bird Hunters* and will run from the end of January until the end of March.



NQCS students dry a moose hide to make a traditional Mi'kmaw drum.

Reconciliation Work

Reconciliation work with NQCS and the Wildcat community was recently rejuvenated. In 2018-2019, students created the "Red Dress Project" to bring awareness to missing and murdered indigenous women. This project won the Lieutenant Governor's award. Additionally, Visual Arts students created an art project that represented the journey towards reconciliation.

"We incorporate this teaching in lower grades as well," says Amiro. "In grades 2/4, we use the aboriginal and seven teaching carpets to weave culture into our day, each and every day."

In September, for Orange Shirt Day, NQCS celebrated with a shirt for every student and a unique design. NQCS teacher, Julie Ramey, designed the shirt that includes the school name alongside the feather and a dragonfly to represent their reconciliation work with the Wildcat community.

Healthy Relationships for Youth

Healthy Relationships for Youth is a mentorship style program with trained youth facilitators. The program is designed to reduce the risk of violence for youth through developing their skills and knowledge about creating and maintaining healthy relationships. Amiro says their school's program has been very successful. Grade 11 and 12 students deliver lessons to the grade 9 classes.

"What we see is increased engagement, more meaningful and in depth conversations and open honest conversation between all students," says Amiro. "Having students who can relate and identify with the material has proved more impactful than teachers delivering the same message."

Re-Introduction of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA)

NQCS's Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) has also recently regained momentum and has been running a number of new awareness activities in the school. Examples of their projects include: the installation of two more flag poles to fly the pride flag as well as the Mi'kmaq nation flag, a student-lead awareness campaign of inclusivity, and planning to paint the school's front walkway in the pride colours this spring.

During October, NQCS welcomed Geordy Marshall. Geordy is the Director of Kepmitelsi - Eskasoni Pride and joined the students virtually to celebrate Mi'kmaw History Month while sharing teachings about being L'nu and Two-Spirit.

Amiro says the support from the students, staff, and the broader community has been absolutely wonderful. "We have received feedback from the Wildcat community about how much more open the school is to students coming from the community, how we are working to find creative solutions and going above and beyond to make students feel welcome." She says it is rewarding seeing the results of their commitment to diversity and inclusion come to life and hopes NQCS can be a leader and inspiration to others.



A Message from the Regional Executive Director

One of SSRCE's key values is diversity and providing students with the opportunity to be enriched by diverse cultures and abilities. We believe schools should not only be places of academic and teaching excellence, but also places that celebrate culture and diversity. I'm pleased to share with you this monthly report that highlights one of our schools, North Queens Community School, and a number of their recent initiatives that focus on this commitment.

While NQCS has made a tremendous commitment to diversity and inclusion, it's important to recognize that they are just one example. There are similar programs happening throughout the region. Many of our schools have jumped on board to promote culture and in turn, have built new relationships both in their schools and in their communities.

As we head into February, our schools will continue to celebrate diversity, as they mark African Heritage Month. In the next issue of our newsletter, we will share highlights of the celebrations, including a feature on some of our African Nova Scotia Student Support Workers.

Nova Scotia has more than 50 historic African Nova Scotian communities with a long, deep, and complex history dating back over 400 years. African Heritage Month provides us with another opportunity to celebrate the culture, legacy, achievements, and contributions of people of African Descent.

The 2021 African Heritage Month theme, Black History Matters: Listen, Learn, Share and Act, recognizes the important legacy of people of African descent and the long-standing history in the development of Nova Scotia, and indeed, Canada. Please follow SSRCE on Facebook and Twitter and join us as we celebrate throughout the month.

Sincerely,
Paul Ash, SSRCE Regional Executive Director

"As we head into February, our schools will continue to celebrate diversity, as they mark African Heritage Month."

- PAUL ASH
SSRCE REGIONAL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Wickwire Academy proudly displays a variety of flags.



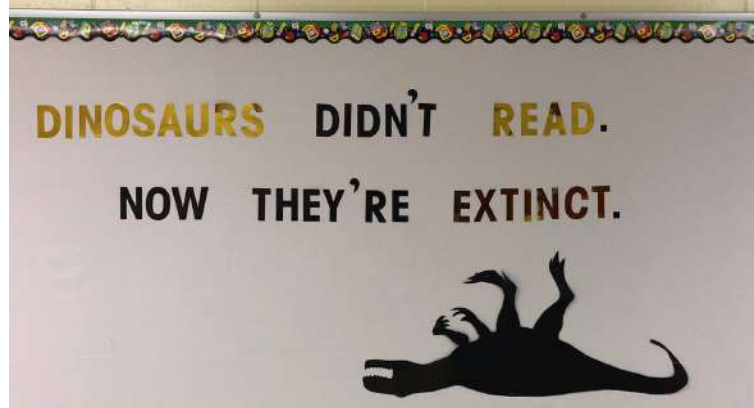
Spotlight on Schools



South Queens Middle School students, Olivia and Garfield Gallant-Zwicker presented the grade 7 students' water testing results of the Mersey River at their local council meeting.



Students at Newcombville Elementary School are now enjoying a new outdoor learning space. Special thank you to Rod Francis, SSRCE Coordinator of Mi'kmaq Services, for visiting to do a smudging of their new tipi.



Following Public Health protocols, the Visual Arts program at Petite Riviere Elementary has started up again. The Grade 5/6 class is pictured to the left, putting their ideas to paper.

The message on the bulletin board at Bridgewater Junior High School inspires students to pick up a book (above).

Spotlight on Schools



New Germany Regional High School Construction Technology 10 students work on skill-building and collaboration (above).

A pre-primary at Bridgewater Elementary shows off doll clothes she created (left).



To celebrate Family Literacy Day on January 27, students and staff at Bluenose Academy dressed as their favourite book characters.

Congratulations


Congratulations to Wickwire Academy for being selected for a WWF Go Wild School Grant for their project, *Mi'kmaw Plants: Traditional and Ecological Knowledge*.

The \$500 will allow for continued development of their outdoor learning space, a traditional birch bark wigwam constructed by the students and staff, alongside Mi'kmaw Elder and Master Builder Todd Labrador, in the spring of 2019.

Now, they will continue to expand this project by working with local First Nations Groups and Acadia First Nation Band members to choose plants that were traditionally used by the Mi'kmaq thousands of years ago. As examples, they will look to plant: sweet grass, spruce trees, witch hazel, wild rose, and wild iris (among others). In addition to restoring a natural habitat, this project will provide another opportunity for students to engage in conversations surrounding traditional First Nations Culture.



Wickwire Academy's outdoor learning space.




Delmore "Buddy" Daye
Learning Institute
Excellence in Africentric Education & Research

The 2021 African Nova Scotian History Challenges

Entries accepted from October 21, 2020 to February 12, 2021

Awards include bursaries totalling \$3,000.00, prizes and gifts.

A collage of prizes for the African Nova Scotian History Challenges, including a portrait of a woman, a t-shirt, and a book.

Apply Now

There's still time to enter this year's African Nova Scotian History Challenges. The deadline for applications is February 12, 2021.

DBDLI Awards for Excellence in African Nova Scotian History are presented to students whose submissions to the Challenges best exemplify the contributions that African Nova Scotians have made to the history, heritage and culture of our province and our country. All Awards include cash bursaries

For full details [click here](#).



BACHELOR OF EDUCATION

Know someone who is interested in teaching but doesn't have the ability to go university on campus?

SSRCE has partnered with StFX to offer a unique off-campus Bachelor of Education program. This program will be offered on evenings and weekends over a three-year period, making it the perfect opportunity for someone to complete the degree while still having the ability to work.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)



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