

Seven Oaks School Division Learning & Service Centre

Spring Newsletter



April 2018

Opportunities on the Horizon



The Service Centre: Phase 1

In the fall of 2017, construction of new Seven Oaks School Division Service Centre began. It is located on a 50-acre Parish Lot in West St. Paul, Manitoba, Treaty 1 Territory. The Service Centre is a multi-use space housing the divisions' maintenance and transportation departments, as well as two conference rooms and vocational trade spaces. The initial construction phase also includes creation of three kilometers of walking trails, a naturalized storm water retention pond and a toboggan hill. The Service Centre will be up and running by the beginning of the next school year, in September 2018.



The Land and Learning Centre



We acknowledge that we are in Treaty One territory and that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

The land surrounding the Service Centre will soon become a new place of learning for students and community. The aspiration is to nurture our connection and relationship with the Land and with each other. Learning *from* the land and *on* the land deepens our connections to the earth that sustains us, to the growing of food which nourishes us, to our roles and responsibilities as land stewards, and to the significance of the historic and present-day cultural connections between people and land.

We believe that restoring our connection to the land, with consistency over time, is a meaningful and impactful way of nurturing a resilient and sustainable community. With Land as teacher and living systems as subject, we unite concepts with practices and experiences that nourish our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual growth. Land-based programming and experiential-learning will enrich both provincial curriculum and Education for Sustainable Development goals.

What does the land look like today?

The 50-acre Parish Lot on Grassmere Road was previously managed agriculturally with annual crops. These crops (like soybeans, canola, wheat) leave the soil bare after each harvest, and as such, our land is currently bare.

However, a walk across the land tells a deeper story. A few stands of cottonwood and poplar grow along the ditch. Willow and dogwood appear at intervals. At their feet rustles the only vegetation left on the land. Remarkably, that which remains in the ditch is a living reminder of the history of the land. A small, authentic remnant of a once grassland.

The tall grass prairie, a grassland ecosystem, covered the land around us not so long ago. We scarcely recognize that this ecosystem is endangered, with less than 1% remaining. Yet, here in our midst stands a resilient diversity of native grasses, flowers and shrubs that are the ecological heritage and historic cultural connection of this land.

How will we care for the land?

Re-vegetation and Ecological Restoration

With many exposed acres to re-vegetate, we are able to practice and model land stewardship by seeding and restoring the land to native prairie species of grasses and flowers. The restoration of native plant biodiversity will in turn support the web of life: native insects, bird and mammal populations, the health of the soil and sequestration of carbon, the health of the water, and the cleanliness of the air. The health of the land is inextricably linked and connected to all life.

Sustainable Food Production

We will share a space to grow and harvest vegetables, herbs, medicines. We will learn to mimic the natural systems and cycles of the land in our gardening and agricultural practices. Through these practices we will become increasingly aware of and tuned into the seasonal cycles and systems of which we are a part. Healthy land, healthy people.

Historic and Cultural Connection

We honour the ways and knowledge of Indigenous cultures. The word “sustainable” is a buzz word today, but for Indigenous Peoples of Canada it has always been a way of life. In 2014, a Circle Garden, Wawiyia’kiti’gahn, was created by Wayfinders. Students and teachers who have visited the garden have taken part in learning about historical Indigenous worldviews on the growing of food, the Medicine Wheel Teachings, the Seven Sacred Teachings and the value of learning through the sacredness of the Indigenous Circle philosophy. Wawiyia’kiti’ghan will be relocated and re-created near the Learning Centre on the land. We continue to deepen our awareness and understanding of the historical and cultural connection of people and land.

Connecting today

Education for Sustainable Development aims to integrate sustainability topics and approaches into the school’s way of learning and being. As we expand opportunities for students to experience education that connects with the earth and how it sustains all life, we also want to continue to support each other as we take on new projects and approaches.

Let’s create ways of supporting each other, sharing the ways we integrate sustainability into our schools to foster the wellness of us all.

- Connect to twitter @7oaksgrows to share, celebrate and harvest ideas and actions
- Request resources and information that support your initiatives
- Submit your recommended resources and project ideas to support your peers and fellow schools
- Stay tuned for 7OaksGrows on the Staff Portal. It is currently under construction, but will be populated soon!

Connect with Alexis Nazeravich, Program Developer for the Learning Centre. She will be creating avenues for sharing resources and support. alexis.nazeravich@7oaks.org