

Since our school's opening in the fall of 2017, École Rivière-Rouge has recognized the importance of honoring and acknowledging indigenous culture. We recognize that our school name, named after the Red River, commemorates an important part of Manitoba's history. Our building sits on land of historic cultural importance and has a story which is intentionally woven throughout the school. The incorporation of a stylized version of an 1817 Selkirk Treaty Map in the flooring imparts an education to students that goes beyond the textbooks. As we impart this knowledge and other histories, we emphasize the understanding of multiple perspectives, notably Aboriginal perspectives and experiences.

Our school logo and goals represent important principles in the Aboriginal worldview and belief systems – namely, interconnectedness, equality, and continuity.



- Every day, our morning announcements acknowledge the indigenous land we stand on and we regularly listen to "Oh Canada" sung in Cree and other aboriginal languages. We choose important dates to play these versions – on the 21st and 30th of each month to commemorate important aboriginal events. As well, a few classrooms are learning to sing "Oh Canada" in Cree.
- At the beginning of the year, classrooms create treaties (promises) that encourage students to relate to one another in positive, respectful and supportive ways.



"In the photo, you see the 7 Teachings are surrounding our classroom treaty. At the beginning of the year we discussed that a treaty means a promise we make about how we are going to live in this space together. We placed our traced hands on the wall to symbolize the promise we were made to be respectful to ourselves, each other, and our classroom. Now, it also symbolizes a promise to honor the 7 Teachings." Gr.2

"We did many activities throughout our study to help deepen our students' understanding of, and connection to, Indigenous People and their history (learned about Treaty Island, read Treaty Tales series and completed Treaty Medals). Upon completion of this project, we posed three questions to our students to help guide their reflection of their learning. Here are some responses:

Question: What is a treaty?

- *A treaty represents a promise.*
- *Treaty making is peace making.*
- *A treaty means friendship.*
- *A treaty represents the Newcomers and the First Nations Peoples coming together. They made 11 treaties.*

Question: How does your medal design represent the spirit and intent of treaty making?

- *Our treaty medal represents how long treaties are for; we drew the sun that is shining, a river that is flowing, and grass that is growing.*
- *A treaty is when two people make an agreement. They shook hands and a long time ago, that meant they made a treaty. We drew two people shaking hands. (Winston & Logan)*
- *Our medal represents a treaty because we all made it together. It represents the things that the Newcomers and First Nations People did together.*

Question: How are you a Treaty Person?

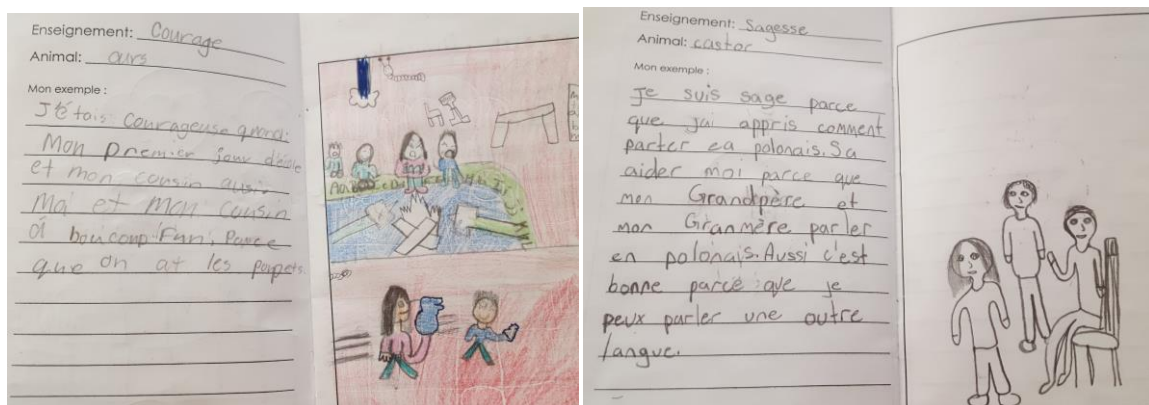
- *We are all Treaty People because we live on Treaty lands.*
- *Because we live in Canada, we are all Treaty People.*
- *A Treaty Person is when you share the land and share everything.*
- *The Treaties are still alive, just like we are. (Gr. 2 & 3)*



- Aboriginal values relating to Mother Earth and connectedness to oneself and others are explored through multiple literacies (art, outdoor education, literature, storytelling, writing).

"We read "Fatty Legs" and discussed/reflected on what it may have been like to attend a residential school."

"On a lu des livres d'images au sujet des 7 enseignements sacrés. Ensuite les élèves ont écrit une réflexion sur chaque enseignement et comment ils ont démontré cela dans leurs vies."



"We wrote several responses to the book, "I am not a number" by Jenny Dupuis."Grade 4 class

Unfortunately...the Indian Agent came and took us away

Fortunately...the bus came, we got a kiss and a hug, and got on the bus with our friends

Unfortunately...when we arrived, I was separated from my brothers, I was given a number, I was given a bath and they cut my hair

Fortunately...the teacher greeted us, I found my name at a table and on the wall. We painted our portraits and I proudly signed my name on the corner.

Unfortunately...the food was disgusting, we ate stale bread and cold porridge.

Fortunately...at lunchtime, we opened our lunchboxes and enjoyed delicious sandwiches made with bannock, Naan bread, pandesal, and holopchi.

Unfortunately..."Miigwetch gayegiin" I said and WHACK, sister Mary hit me with a wooden spoon

Fortunately...we learn languages, we sing, we talk, EVERY CHILD MATTERS!

Unfortunately...the impact of residential schools still hurts

Fortunately...we are starting to fix it

Unfortunately...Residential

- Aboriginal culture and practices are directly experienced...jigging, drumming, violin playing, smudging, and language.



"The Bear Song - Manitou Makwa - was a truly emotional moment for me as I heard the children sing in Ojibway, this was very meaningful on many levels for me and for my family. The efforts the school is making to tell the stories and showcase the strengths and contributions that Indigenous people have made reinforce my efforts to shape a positive identity for my son as a Metis boy and to stand tall and proud." parent

The following stories hi-light a variety of school-wide initiatives over the past year and into 2017-18.

Orange Shirt Day

We celebrated Orange Shirt Day the past two years, revisiting the story of Phyllis Webstadd and honoring residential school survivors. Classrooms were presented with the novel, "Je ne suis pas un nombre". At both assemblies, we were honored to have invited guests from Riverbend school to share their stories, drum and sing a prayer song.



Jigging

Students in our "Club de Jigue" enthusiastically learned the basic steps of traditional Métis jigging as well as the history of the jig, its relationship to the name of our school and the land on which it was built. Students from grades 1-5 enjoyed jigging at various assemblies at our school. In addition, the grade 4/5 group jigged at the SOSD Grad Pow Wow.



When artist Jackie Traverse came to visit our school she shared a story that she had heard about jigging:

"Do you know why the jig doesn't involve much movement of the arms? At one time, jigging was prohibited from being practiced. Metis people continued jigging by doing it secretly, moving their feet under the table." (shared with permission by Jackie Traverse).

Aboriginal Day

Last June, we celebrated Aboriginal day with a school wide assembly that specifically showcased the Métis culture. Our assembly featured:

Jigging by the Ivan Flett Memorial Dancers: We were truly impressed with the talent of Michael and Cienna Harris as they entertained us with traditional and modern dancing of the Red River Jig!



Fiddling with Double the Trouble: Luc and Adam Wrigley, two French-Metis and Cree twins had us clapping and tapping to several songs that they played on their violins, including the Red River Jig.



Metis Artist Nicoel Leclair: Nicole Leclair shared her passion for Metis culture through her art. She shared some of her work and talked about her art form pointillism:

"My pointillism is an interpretation of my Métis Ancestors' traditional beadwork. The graphic details of our beading characterized our style and Métis People were commonly referred to as the "Flower People".



Nicole worked with every class and each student had the opportunity to explore pointillism. Every student creation was then assembled into a large mural. When students returned to school this fall, they were excited to see the beautiful mural and find their contribution. We are thrilled that our experience was featured in one of Nicole's blog...

<http://metisart.ca/2017/09/08/sharing-metis-culture-k-6s/#comment-60>

Award-winning Author David Bouchard

This past November, we had the pleasure of welcoming award-winning author, David Bouchard as a guest to École Rivière-Rouge. Mr. Bouchard is well known for his many books: "If You're not from the Prairie", "Prairie Born", "Ça c'est du hockey!" "Qu'Appelle" and "Seven Sacred Teachings". Mr. Bouchard teaches valuable lessons about the importance of being proud of who you are and celebrating your culture. He talked about his parent's and grandparent's struggle with being Métis. "They tried to hide their Metis background out of fear of being bullied or treated unfairly." Mr. Bouchard shared the music of his many handmade native flutes and why he proudly wears the Métis sash. He shared his knowledge of the Seven Sacred teachings and how these teachings are about Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility and Truth can lead us to be the best we can be. Each teaching is represented by an animal and demonstrates the connection and respect that animals have for Mother Earth and how we can live in connection to ourselves, one another and our space.



Artist:
Jackie Traverse

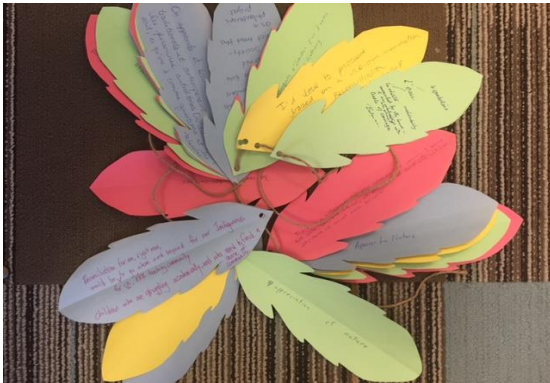
As one of our Aanni books, each class received "Les Sept Enseignements" by David Bouchard. Classrooms have engaged in different activities to learn about the 7 teachings in meaningful and authentic ways.



We were then excited to work with Jackie Traverse as she helped our students create 7 murals depicting the seven traditional teachings of the Anishinaabe. In each of the murals, she also helped students incorporate the infinity symbol to honour the Métis culture.

Professional Development

- In the afternoon of our Divisional Professional Development day, we were pleased to have David Boulanger explore with us indigenous perspectives of health and well-being. We drummed together, learning of the significance of the drum and connecting with the heartbeat of Mother Earth.
- Six members of our staff were granted an educational leave in 2017 to increase their knowledge of aboriginal perspectives and resources available for students in French. They visited the Human Rights Museum and at the University of Manitoba. Valuable



resources shared with others included "Verite et reconciliation: De quoi s'agit-il?"

- Another school wide professional development day focused on "Truth and Reconciliation" and what that meant to each of us and how we were to move together forward in our school.