



OZHAAWASHKWAA ANIMIKII-BINESHI

Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun

Autumn 2021

Newsletter



AUTUMN AT THE AKI CENTRE

Land-based learning sees the Land as our text, our guide, our teacher. Autumn at the Aki Centre connects us to medicines and tall grass prairie plants in bloom and in seed, showing us what biodiversity looks like. We see the relationships between the plants and other beings. Seeds become plentiful and are ripening to pick, to be eaten, or to fall on the soil to sleep before spring. The vegetable garden is ready to harvest, to make a feast, or preserve for later. The compost is hot and in need of water, turning, and sifting. All this action is trailed by a tug of urgency. We've been given everything we need to live. Soon the landscape will change, some will migrate, some will sleep or slow down under the snow, and others will adapt to live above the snow.

INDIGENOUS SEED HARVEST

The 35 acres undergoing Prairie Restoration are showing signs of transformation, despite record drought conditions! In Autumn, the Aki Centre connects students, staff, and community members to the restoration areas and Remnant Prairie. We connect to Indigenous plant knowledge, relationships between plants and others, habitats, biodiversity, conservation, water quality, and climate change. With students, we collected 45lbs of seeds from one restored plot. This gives us the means to re-seed other areas. With less than 1% of the tall grass prairie remaining in MB, we can't help but reiterate the sentiments of some students, "this feels heroic"!



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COMPOST. IT'S ALIVE!



Above: Students using the microscope camera to share magnifications of microbes in the compost.

23 SOSD School sites contribute their organic matter to the compost program housed at the Aki Centre. In Autumn, Aki Centre welcomes students get up close to the compost. We discuss decomposition, rot, chemical change, climate change, and microbes. Students mix, water, aerate, and sift compost to make conditions right for fungi, bacteria, and insects to do their work to complete the decomposition process. For the skeptics in the groups, we put compost under the microscope to see who lives in the compost, and we question what they are doing. It never ceases to amaze the students to see the microbes in action. Compost is alive!

PUMPKIN SMASH 2021

Thanks to the fantastic Compost Coordinator, Alex Loeppyk, for working with all the schools to bring in halloween pumpkins. Thousands of kilos of pumpkins were collected to turn into compost! The weekend event saw pumpkin smashers, bowlers, tossers, and crushers. In came the student tour guides, Master Composters, and reasons to snack on pumpkin tarts! All this smashing and mess making greatly helps to compost the pumpkins by increasing their surface area so they decompose quickly. Thank you, pumpkin donors and smashers for diverting this organic waste from the landfill! Anyone re-thinking pumpkins after this???

Check out some of SOSD's great student compost advocates, interviewed by CTV, [here!](#)



GARDENING

Aki Centre's vegetable garden is diverse. It grows a variety of vegetable and herbs, teas, medicines, and flowers. Connecting to this space in fall offers a lot to the harvester, cook, and preserver, but also an opportunity to give back. We work with classes to mulch the paths, to top rows with compost, to harvest foods and seeds, to dry teas, and plant fall crops. In Autumn, Indigenous plants are completing their life cycles, ripening their seeds and tubers, and feeding late season birds and insects. Foods that originated elsewhere, like tomatoes, may still be fruiting and blossoming, and unable to complete their full life cycles. Gardens connects us to geography, culture, language and traditions. Sharing this experience connects us in many ways.



RELATIONSHIPS

Thank you to Ms. Oakley and class for sharing this next story.

Ms. Oakley's class (RF Morrison) have been learning about Indigenous plants and ways of knowing at the Aki Centre. They returned to school inspired to increase the biodiversity of plants on their school yard. They began learning how Indigenous plants attract birds, insects, and pollinators and how they support us by providing foods, medicines, materials, and even by sequestering carbon to keep the air clean. Their actions included planting and caring for Indigenous plant gardens at school!



Meeting and identifying Indigenous plants at the Aki Centre lead to learning about the plants relationships with other creatures and their environments. The students developed a passion for studying the food chain. They created a bulletin board to show their friends and families what they were learning, and where their curiosities had taken them.

Coming to the Aki Centre for a couple visits became a whole term of continued learning in nearby nature and on the school yard as they revitalized, stewarded, and came to know the land around themselves. So much GROWTH! Check out their interpretation work, below!





The SOSD's Indigenous Cultural Education Course is a "leaving to learn" opportunity for Indigenous High School students to come together once a month and learn about ceremony, traditional lifestyles, current issues, activism, and community organizations. The Indigenous Cultural Education Course follows the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, creating events that will meet the needs of the students holistically.

Over 3 days in October, students came together at the Aki Centre with Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters to learn about traditions of harvesting geese, how to pluck and gut the geese, and prepare the meat.



Educator Resources

Aki Centre Resources:

Practice Anishinaabemowin! Learn how to say our name [here](#), with Elder Dan.

Our NEW Mural! [Listen and watch](#) Jordan Stranger share his stories, knowledge and artistic process when creating the mural that hangs above the main entrance to the Aki Centre.

Language, Medicines, Names and Stories:

The Warblers Podcast by Birds Canada: [Bneshiinyik](#). Join Joe Pitawanakwat as he shares about how birds are named in Ojibwe and the teachings and gifts they share with us.

CBC The Current: [Reviving Indigenous languages could help tackle climate crisis](#). Join Joe and others as they share how Indigenous names hold tremendous amounts of knowledge, and learn hear that where language is protected, so is that environment.

Anishinaabe taxonomy of plants, the way that plants are named, with Joe Pitawanakwat. [Wild Bergamot, Wild Beebalm, Mooshkooaowis.](#)

Tall Grass Prairie :

Aki Centre Video, [Controlled Burn of the Remnant Prairie](#)
[Guardians of the Grasslands](#) Documentary,
CBC's Documentary [Grasslands: A Hidden Wilderness](#)
Nature Conservancy of Canada's Podcast: [Episode 5](#)

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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WEEDING, WATERING, TREEPLANTING, HARVESTING THIS SEASON!

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INDIGENOUS SEEDS TO ENHANCE OUR RESTORATION EFFORTS

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