

Changing Lives through
Science Fairs

the centre

CHASING
**SNOW
SNAKES**
& LEARNING
TRADITIONAL SKILLS

**Skywoman Learns
& Lands**

**ACCESSING
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE
ONLINE AT THE
IRC LIBRARY**

Manitoba 
First Nations Education
Resource Centre Inc.

FALL 2023

ISSN 2816-8720 (Print)
ISSN 2816-8739 (Online)

≡ANNUAL≡ MFNERC/MFNSS FIRST NATIONS CROSS-COUNTRY MEET

MFNERC Cross-Country Meet Was a Galloping Good Time

MFNERC's annual Cross-Country Meet was held on September 26, 2023, at La Barriere Park near Winnipeg. It was a wonderful day with over 15 schools taking part. The students were excited and energetic before the race started and a lot of fun was had by all. MFNERC's Executive Director, Charles Cochrane, spoke to the kids before their races and encouraged them to run hard but to enjoy themselves and the nice day.

We would like to thank the great volunteers who make the MFNERC Cross-Country Meet possible every year. Here are just a few scenes from that great day.



A photograph of a young child with dark hair, smiling broadly, sitting in a grassy field. The image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay. The text 'WELCOME TO' is in a small, white, sans-serif font. Below it, 'the' is in a large, white, thin-outlined font, and 'centre' is in a large, white, bold sans-serif font.

WELCOME TO the centre

This magazine highlights the good work of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (the Resource Centre) and the Manitoba First Nations School System (MFNSS), with a focus on the work being done to promote the First Nations languages and cultures of these lands.

The Centre is published each season of the school year and contains stories that let people know how the Resource Centre and MFNSS are working in collaboration with First Nations and making an impact in the First Nations they serve. The Resource Centre and MFNSS are full of passionate people who are dedicated to making a better future for First Nations youth and families. Resource Centre staff have stories to share about the students and the impact that educational strategies like land-based learning are having on First Nations' future generations. There are stories about young people being given the tools they need to overcome the challenges they face and stories about the choices First Nations are making to strengthen their languages, cultures, and unity.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *The Centre*.

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MESSAGE FROM THE **CHAIR OF THE BOARD**

A new school year starts and the work begins to uplift First Nations youth in their local schools. I enjoy seeing the smiling faces of the students and staff as a new school year begins.

I also appreciate sitting down with the other Board members and the Education Directors and seeing their commitment to the young people in their First Nations. As a senior member of the Resource Centre's Board of Directors,

I'm honoured to witness First Nations' commitment to the youth and their futures. I welcome new Board members and am excited to work with them to pursue better education experiences and opportunities for First Nations students.

Last year, the Resource Centre continued to work on existing and new endeavours, such as an online dictionary workshop, land-based language planning, and community-based yearly planning. Developers collaborated to provide service delivery and project work in the First Nations schools, such as the Master-Apprentice Model for Language Revitalization and Honouring the Child School Mini Powwow.

The Resource Centre's Board of Directors approved the purchase of new equipment, including a new library automation system, and training in that new system is being carried out. Both the Winnipeg and Thompson Instructional Resource Centre libraries have completed their collection inventories and are currently addressing any glitches. The program will allow online access to the resource inventory. The library automation system will be available on the Resource Centre's website (www.mfnerc.org) for school staff to view and access resources for use in the classroom.

The Resource Centre's foundation is First Nations languages and cultures to build a better future for Nations and children. The Resource Centre and partner First Nations continue to establish education systems that help communities improve education for all learners to achieve mino-pimatisiwin.



Chief Clarence Easter
Chemawawin Cree Nation



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Fall issue of *The Centre* magazine. I hope everyone had a wonderful summer and enjoyed any vacation time they may have had.

Here at the Resource Centre, we are excited to share another school year with First Nations students and families across the province. Watching schools, staff, and students develop and grow in their learning and skills is always a pleasure.

Every year the Resource Centre also grows its skills and services, and there are a number of changes that schools and staff can take advantage of to improve the classroom experience for First Nations youth.

For example, administrators and teachers can now benefit from the work of our Digital Learning Environment team, which has developed new ways of accessing and organizing the mountains of information that schools and teachers climb through. The organization of this information will allow teachers and staff to dedicate more time to students' education needs.

We also have a new group of professionals ready and willing to help First Nations students! Last fiscal year, a cohort of First Nations educational psychologists graduated through a partnership agreement with the University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education. These dedicated people are available to help First Nations students deal with any mental health concerns.

I sincerely hope teachers, schools, and students can use and benefit from the new services and skills offered by the Resource Centre throughout the school year and in the future.

All the best to the students and staff as they move forward into the new school year.



Charles Cochran
Ebb and Flow First Nation



Quality Education for Our Children

OUR VISION

Support First Nations to develop and implement a comprehensive holistic educational system inclusive of First Nations languages, world views, values, beliefs and traditions with exemplary academic standards, under First Nation jurisdiction.

OUR MISSION

To help First Nations improve education for all learners to achieve: mino-pimatisiwin (Ininiwak/Anishinaabe/Anishininiwak), honso aynai (Denesuline), tokatakiya wichoni washte (Dakota).

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of the MFNERC is to provide education specialist service delivery to First Nation schools. The focus of the services is to provide assistance towards the implementation of programming that is relevant to First Nation students' needs, to provide the direction and leadership for long term education reform that will lead to the development of a First Nations Curriculum, and to provide training, guidance, and support to First Nations staff and educational leadership to facilitate capacity building.

OUR BELIEFS

A transformative quality education system founded on First Nations languages, histories, and cultures to nurture each child's identity and growth

Recognizing, nurturing and celebrating each child's unique gifts

Supporting respectful, empathetic and successful learners with critical thinking and effective communication skills

Equitable access to rich learning experiences in a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment

Building on a shared vision of our children, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, families, First Nations, leaders, and staff

OUR PRIORITIES

- A culturally responsive environment
- An environment that promotes health, safety, and well-being
- An inclusive and respectful learning community that is child-centred, responsive and relevant
- Support for student learning and engagement through improved instruction and assessment practices



about MFNERC

The Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc. (the Resource Centre) provides the province's leading education, administration, technology, language, and culture services to First Nations schools in Manitoba.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs established the Resource Centre through a resolution in 1998 to provide coordinated second- and third-level education services to First Nations schools in Manitoba. The Resource Centre has served over 51 schools from 41 First Nations for over 23 years.

Respecting the diversity of Manitoba's First Nations is an essential facet of the Resource Centre's ability to support the schools in affiliated communities. Best practices informed by academic research and extensive experience working with First Nations are promoted through the various departments, using a service delivery team approach.

The Resource Centre promotes and encourages First Nations involvement in all aspects of developing and implementing educational change.



the centre

The Centre features Fall, Winter and Spring issues.
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Contact 204-594-1290, info@mfnerc.com



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Charles Cochrane

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Michael Hutchinson

EDITORS

Kirby Gilman, Desirae Warkentin, Maureen Epp

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Amber Green, Lesley Page

WRITERS/CONTRIBUTORS

Jason Bone, Brenda Daniels, Digital Learning Environment Team

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Norbert Mercredi, Lois Daniels-Mercredie, Alberto Mansilla,
Sarabelle Garson, Dylan Bercier, Fred McKay Jr.

COVER PHOTO

(left to right) Fred McKay Jr., Sarabelle Garson, and Dylan Bercier
at the Canada-Wide Science Fair

Limited print run for MFNERC-affiliated schools and
available online at www.mfnerc.org

UNLOCKING 21st Century LEARNING WITH CONNECT: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR FIRST NATIONS

SEAMLESS ACCESS, EFFORTLESS LEARNING

CONNECT is the Resource Centre's innovative eLearning solution that's changing the way students and teachers experience education.

Launched last year, it has become the gateway to digital education for schools in the Manitoba First Nations School System (MFNSS). With a single username and password, students and teachers gain access to a world of educational resources.

One teacher from a MFNSS school shared, "CONNECT has made things more seamless in the classroom. Instead of remembering a bunch of passwords or scanning a bunch of QR codes, it's just one and done, and everything we use is in one place. It has helped me and made me and my classroom more efficient."

Teachers can now change student passwords securely and with efficiency, reducing login struggles and increasing valuable learning time. Even younger students can log in with ease using a





special quick card that is scanned by the device camera. Managing their classroom's links, tools, and passwords with ease is a game changer for teachers. With CONNECT, First Nations schools are embracing technology that equips students with essential 21st-century skills.

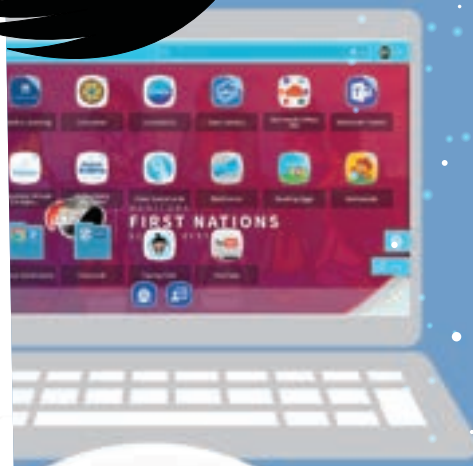
A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

Last year, Microsoft Office 365 accounts, Mathletics, Reading Eggs, and Math Seeds were a hit. This year, we're introducing exciting new apps like Canva Education for both students and teachers. And don't miss out on the free trial of Kahoot! starting this October. Plus, there's a wealth of professional development opportunities through LinkedIn Learning and the Resource Centre's new CONNECT PD environment.

Your Journey with CONNECT

Feel free to give CONNECT a try today at connect.mfnerc.org with the username and password provided by the Resource Centre or MFNSS

Do you have questions or need assistance with CONNECT? Reach out to our dedicated support team at servicedesk@mfnerc.com. Be sure to check your email for invitations to upcoming webinars offering training and new features.



TEACHERS



STUDENTS

Pilot Schools Wanted: Be a Part of the Future

As we look ahead to the 2023-24 school year, we're searching for pilot schools to join us. Your school is a good fit if it

- currently uses Outcomes SIS by Dadavan
- has stable and reliable internet access
- has available student devices
- has technology leaders

Contact Don Monkman, Manager, Digital Learning Environment, for more information. donm@mfnerc.com, 1-204-594-6509

Join us in shaping the future of education with CONNECT. Together, we'll empower our students and transform learning.



DON
MONKMAN



ACCESSING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE ONLINE AT THE IRC LIBRARY

The Instructional Resource Centre (IRC) offers teachers and staff access to support materials and resources to reinforce their educational plans. The IRC operates like a standard library, functioning as a central hub for accessing lesson plans, reading resources, activities, and teaching concepts. However, it distinguishes itself from other libraries by offering First Nations Traditional Knowledge and ideas on integrating that knowledge into contemporary education systems.

Lois Daniels-Mercredie has worked as one of the Resource Centre's library facilitators. She is excited about the information and lessons the IRC holds and what they can do for teachers and their students.

"The IRC is accessible to anyone affiliated with the Resource Centre or MFNSS (Manitoba First Nations School System). Teachers and staff can access relevant research and study-based teaching tools that continuously evolve. These tools include comprehensive semester topic kits containing books, lesson plans, activities, and virtually everything a teacher might require for Kindergarten to high school students. The IRC truly caters to a diverse audience, and I'd really like to see it get used more often."

The IRC has two locations, one in Winnipeg and the other in Thompson. The IRC now has a new

library automation system, and both locations have completed uploading their collections and inventories. This new system allows staff to access inventories online and will soon be available to all MFNERC and MFNSS staff on the Resource Centre's website. Training for this new library automation system and how to access it through the CONNECT system is available on request. It is hoped that such a system will overcome the challenges experienced by schools in remote locations.

"Our students need to engage with their curriculum and establish a deeper connection, moving beyond mere memorization," remarked Daniels-Mercredie, a former educator and library technician. "Historically, colonial educational systems have occasionally been advantageous to our communities, but most times, they have tragically led to detrimental outcomes. I am happy to be a part of the Resource Centre team, devoted to First Nations taking responsibility for teaching their youth."

For more information on the IRCs, contact the Winnipeg location (204-594-1290) or Barb Dollmont at the Thompson IRC (1-877-506-1568).

**Since this interview, Daniels-Mercredie has returned to a teaching position.*



“**Hey,**
teachers, students,
and staff!”

“Would you like
to be a part of
The Centre
magazine?”

**We are always looking
for content.**

We'd like to see:

- student or staff profiles of people who are doing exceptional work
- student artwork
- stories on exciting things happening at your school or in your First Nation

If you have an idea or suggestion,
please email michaelh@mfnerc.com

*Your story,
featured here!*



The Value of Chasing SNOW SNAKES



Norbert Mercredi has been chasing snow snakes since he was a boy. Throwing snow snakes, or Sosoman, as the game is called in Swampy Cree, involves tossing or

sliding spear-like sticks across the ice and snow. Sosoman helps develop the values, skills, and physical strength needed for living.

As the Resource Centre's land-based physical education facilitator, Mercredi does his best to use the games and sports he grew up with to instill First Nations philosophies and skills in the youth of today. Mercredi says the students he teaches become curious when he takes them out on the land to learn about the activities of their ancestors. Playing the snow snake game is a lot of fun and includes craft, skill building, and the philosophies of old.



NORBERT
MERCREDI

"Those snow snakes would travel far over the ice, just going and going. The strongest players could throw them for miles and miles. I've been told that, in the old days, hunters would use sticks to trip up their prey, maybe a caribou traveling over the ice. A stick would be thrown at their feet to get them to fall, and then they could be better caught and harvested. So, the snow snake game was building skills."

As with many traditional games, Mercredi says, the snow snake game was played in different ways in different areas by different First Nations. In general, it involves taking a long straight stick, usually carved to have a bulbous head at the top, and then throwing or sliding that stick along the ice or snow. The person whose snow snake travels the farthest is recognized as the winner of the game.

"The snow snake game involved learning to take turns, working with others, and learning many of the skills needed to be a good hunter. Whether thrown overhand or underhand, the game developed physical strength, especially in your shoulder and arm. It involved learning to hold opinions and dealing with the opinions of others, and all this sat within the values of the entire community."

Mercredi says the whole activity is a teaching tool. Building the snow snake throwing course means creating mutually agreed-upon rules and working together. Creating snow snakes involves teachings around harvesting the appropriate wood and individual crafting, as the spear is carved and decorated. Playing the game itself is a physical challenge that builds up the muscles and hand-eye coordination needed



for hunting. Once a game is concluded, the players learn the etiquette of sportsmanship and respect that comes with earning a win or suffering a loss.

“For me, it was the companionship that is created when competing. It wasn’t about holding yourself over other people, but rather building self-confidence so that you can have pride in your own accomplishments. It was about developing skills that you could use to help others, to be a good hunter. Young people would look up to you if you were good at something, and the people would recognize your achievements. But people will not look up to you if you brag or act like you’re better than them. In the old days, competition involved having respect, showing humility, and being true to yourself and others in the community.”

Another winter game that Mercredi teaches his students is traditional shinny hockey, which also builds up physical strength and skill while teaching traditional values surrounding competition and individual achievement.

“We used to use birch, back in the day, because it was strong, and you could often find it having that physical shape of a hockey stick, long and straight with a bend

at the end. For a puck, we’d use a round stone, but I’ve seen other communities use a slice of a tree—the round piece that is created when it is cut across the middle.”

Mercredi says traditional hockey taught the skill of running over ice in slippery moccasins, which would have been crucial for hunting in the winter. As a boy, he remembers how he and his teammates would step on empty evaporated milk cans, and bend them around the heels of their footwear so they would have more traction on the ice.

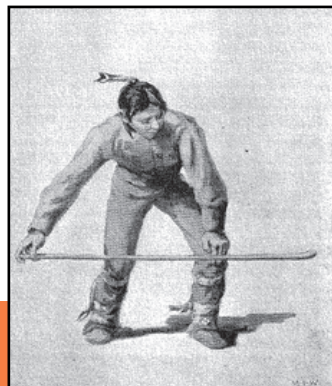
As a physical education teacher, Mercredi says the physical aspect of the games is an important part of the work he does for the Resource Centre.



“There is actually information on our physical fitness back in the olden times. When European explorers first met First Nations people, they described us as ‘robust.’ They used that word ‘robust’ to mean that we were healthy and strong as a people, both men and women. We had physical strength and stature because everyone was working hard and eating well.”

Whatever the traditional sport or game, Mercredi says they are effective tools to teach young First Nations people about the values and

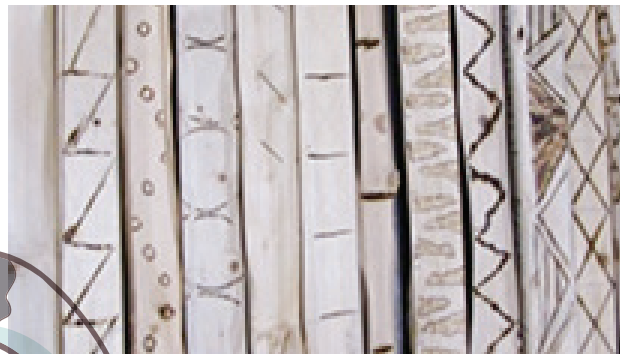
“It is important young people learn to live with themselves and this knowledge. And really, it is all about love. In English there is only one word for love, but we had many words. There is love you have for yourself, the love you have for your friends and teammates, and the love you have for your community and the community has for you. It takes the whole community learning and expressing these values and beliefs to bring them to life. Sports, games, and competition were a part of learning about each other and learning about ourselves.”



skills that kept their ancestors alive and thriving in some of the harshest winters on the planet. He says the excitement and interest that his students show when he introduces them to traditional land-based activities underlines the value of taking kids out on the land.

HOW TO BUILD A SNOW SNAKE COURSE AND PLAY THE GAME





1 MAKING THE COURSE

The snow snake game can be played on the ice and snow as they occur naturally in the environment. However, the game can also be played by clearing the ice entirely of snow, by building a trough within the snow, or by building a raised trough in the snow. To create a trough in the snow, Mercredi ties a rope to either end of a log and, with the help of a friend, pulls the log through the snow, creating a depression for the length of the course. He has also seen communities build a long, raised trough about waist height that can be straight or zig-zagged, depending on what the snow snake throwers agree upon.

2 MAKING THE SNOW SNAKES

Mercredi usually looks for long, straight spruce saplings when searching for suitable sticks to make into snow snakes. Snow snakes often have a slightly bulbous “head” that adds weight to the forward end of the snake. Once cut, an offering is made for the sapling. The thrower will carve and decorate the stick as they wish. A thrower may have just one stick or several sticks, depending on the rules agreed upon and the number of turns each thrower has.

3 PLAYING THE GAME

Snow snakes can be thrown overhand when playing in open ice and snow or underhand when using a trough. The idea is to throw the snake with enough force to have it slide as far as possible. Rules should be worked out between the throwers before they start throwing. The snow snake that stops the farthest from the thrower determines the winner.



Changing Lives through Science Fairs

The benefits of science fairs

The Resource Centre's Science and Technology facilitator, Alberto Mansilla, has seen the impact that submitting an experiment for a science fair and then presenting the work to others has had on students across the province.

"It builds their self-confidence, which can make such an impact in their future. One hundred per cent of the time, even if they are not recognized at the end, there is that building up of confidence in that student. When they come back, they are different."

Mansilla explains the process of taking part in the science fair includes so many elements of a student's learning experience that it cannot help but have a beneficial effect on both students and teachers. He says at schools served by the Resource Centre and the Manitoba First Nations School System (MFNSS), the process starts with students looking around at their local environment and gaining a better understanding that everyone is a part of the world around them.

"It starts with the work plan, which is focused on project-based and place-based learning. We want them to study their own environment and study the ecosystems around them—the trees around them, the

animals, the plants, and the climate. Due to the place-based learning, they become conscious of being part of the environment around them, which is the idea behind the *First Nations Education Framework*. We want them to develop a respect for their environment and for their Elders. For them to be able to give gratitude for what makes them alive, what gives them life."

Creating a science fair project touches on numerous skills and subjects, including written and verbal communication; math skills like graph making or statistical analysis; and, of course, science and the scientific method. Mansilla says it starts with the student looking around their First Nation and identifying a challenge or process they want to resolve or better understand.

"Students will look for a problem, very near to their heart, that they want to solve, which then becomes the introduction and the background of their project. They'll use their English studies or their own First Nations language to develop that. Then, a question arises: What do they want to do to better understand the issue? So, the phrasing of the hypothesis and the statistical analysis comes in. And then, the methodology and the critical thinking: How would they solve this problem? They must come up with a plan and an ex-

periment. And, once they have the results of the experiment, they'll be introduced to mathematical concepts like graphs, tables, and comparable analysis."

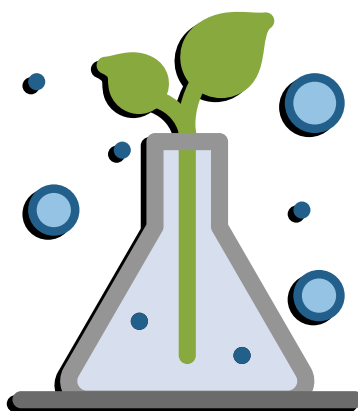
Mansilla says there is a thread that goes through the making of the science fair project that flows through the entire Manitoba science curriculum, including Cluster 0, which includes scientific inquiry and the design process. The students are also expected to create a bibliography and acknowledgments so they better understand that today's science, like so many things in life, is built on the work of others who have gone on before.

"The science fair project is a series of activities that will really awaken their scientific ability, and the focus is not on the competition, it's about participation, but the science fair can also develop the competitive self. It introduces the idea of the student building up their confidence, so they can provide a proper and effective presentation. Every time a child presents at the science fair, we are so conscious that all this is taking place. All of this is embedded into that simple activity of the science project. All the curriculum is in there, everything."

While Mansilla insists the science fair is not about competition, he does admit a student winning the science fair can get everyone involved with the local school excited. He tells the story of one school within MFNSS that was not putting forward any projects. The Resource Centre's staff went to the school, asking how they could help in developing student interest in participating. Eventually, the teacher asked all their students to submit an idea for an experiment based on local concerns. This led to a few students submitting projects for consideration, including one Grade 12 student who hand-wrote the explanations on their presentation board. Due to the hand-written notes, their potential experiment was overlooked, but the Resource Centre supervisor encouraged the science facilitator to go back and take another look. In the end, the student's project was chosen to go to the next stage. While their presentation board wasn't much to look at, the student was able to clearly explain what they wanted from their experiment. What followed was two months of analysis and devel-

opment. Given the subject of the experiment, the student worked with one of the Resource Centre's school psychologists and the science facilitator to flesh out the idea and hone the project. Eventually, the student won third prize at the Canada-Wide Science Fair (CWSF). Mansilla says that after that one student did so well, the whole school was awakened to the benefits of submitting science fair projects.

"Suddenly, everyone wanted to do it. For years after, that school was so active. It really awakened everyone, from the teachers and the students to the parents and the Chief and Council. That student went on to train with the military, part of what they won was a one-year, science-related scholarship to one of the sponsoring universities that helped with their future studies. It changed their life."



A focus on the Medicine Wheel and First Nations philosophies is one of the special things about science fair projects that come out of the Resource Centre and MFNSS. Coming from the Philippines, Mansilla says he is happy that students are learning about their connections to the land, the people around them, and their spiritual side. He says the teachings about these connections are often missing from the curriculums of other cultures.

"We are developing a system of using First Nations languages and cultures as the context of everything we deliver to the communities. We have been developing comprehensive lesson plans that allow us to use the Medicine Wheel and, at the same time, acknowledging the cognitive knowledge, the physical, the spiritual, and then the social aspects of life. In my experience, almost all the countries in Asia are very focused on cognitive knowledge. We force our kids to do drills, like in math. But we have forgotten the social, we have forgotten the spiritual, we forgot the physical. It creates a sort of disconnect with the families, and it creates a disconnect with the people around you. The only focus is to learn, learn, learn without the social interactions and without the spiritual support."

Taking part in the science fair program is very rewarding for Mansilla. He says it can offer a lot to teachers too, as it gives them insight into how well their students

are comprehending lessons by having the students put their learning into action. Since the projects involve all aspects of the curriculum, teachers can see the impact that they are having with real-world results. Mansilla encourages teachers to take part in the regional science fairs to eventually have some of their students reach the national level.

“Every year it identifies the most brilliant kids in Canada. At CWSF, there are only 10 gold, 30 silver, and 40 bronze medals, and that is it. The CWSF averages

around 400 students each year. So, when you get that bronze, it is not just bronze—you have proven you are a part of the one per cent of the most brilliant young people in Canada. And there is also the recognition from post-secondary institutions, like the First Nations University of Canada. There are so many universities and colleges there. It drives us to excel, to really help the teachers. When a student does well, it shows everyone what has been accomplished. It makes us so proud that we can guide a student and expand their understanding of what is possible in their life.”

Awards, Learning, and Fun at the Canada-Wide Science Fair

At the CWSF, Grade 7 student **Fred Mckay Jr.** of O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation received the First Nations University of Canada Recognition Award for his project exploring the potential of extracting essential oil from juniper and cedar.

1. How would you describe science? Is it essential? Why?

Science is fun, especially when you know what you are doing. Science is important because it is everywhere, and learning it can make our lives fun, better, and easier.

2. What inspired you to create your project for the science fair?

I always wanted to do something with Native American plants and make pure essential oil, but I couldn't. So, I tried and made hydrosol instead, which still has the same benefits.

3. What was the most challenging/enjoyable part of this project?

I enjoyed preparing the materials and harvesting the plants. Making the hydrosols is challenging but fun.

4. How did it feel when you found out you were selected?

It made me feel excited and surprised.



5. What was your favourite part of the whole trip?

My favourite part of the trip was going to another province and shopping.

6. What did you learn from the experience?

I learned about other people's projects and how interesting science can be. It encourages me more to do other projects and to be better.

7. Are First Nations ways of knowing a part of science?

Explain.

Yes. Science is learning and understanding our land, just like what we do. It helps us to relate more and understand how everything is important and connected.

One Student's Experience at the Canada-Wide Science Fair

Sarabelle Garson is from Fisher River Cree Nation and her project on the Three Sisters—corn, bean, and squash—and why they should be grown together won her a gold medal at the Resource Centre's Regional Science Fair in Winnipeg. After her win at the regional level, she went on to CWSF in Edmonton. Sarabelle was interviewed in Edmonton just before the final judging and spoke about her experience up to that point.

"It's been good so far. It's been really busy, and I've been trying to do as much reading as I possibly can. I've been trying to read up on my board, just to make sure I can recite everything, and I have everything stuck in my head."

After the first round of judging, Sarabelle gained a better idea of what was expected at the national level and how to work on improving her presentation.

"My first judge, I couldn't answer a few of her questions because I didn't really know what to expect at first, and I was a little bit nervous and I didn't say a lot of the things I wanted to say at first. But with the last few judges, I did really well because I knew what to expect this time, and I learned from my first one. So, I did the opposite of what I did wrong."

Two other projects came out of the Resource Centre's and MFNSS's science fair process, and their creators also had a chance to go. When in Edmonton, the students took part in several activities including a visit to the University of Alberta and to Canada's largest mall.

The trip to the university inspired Sarabelle to think about her future.

"It was really cool to see. I have never been to a university, like, on a tour like that before. And I got to see those rocks and computer programming. I got to learn

a lot of new cool stuff. I want to go to university for sure. Maybe science, but I'm not 100 per cent sure of what I want to do yet."

Of course, the trip to the mall was a highlight.

"I like the sightseeing. There is a lot of stuff I haven't seen before out here, especially the mall. The ship inside the mall was really cool to see. I kind of have a shopping addiction. I got a lot of clothes. I want to buy a souvenir that has something about Edmonton on it. I want to buy something that will help me remember here."

Although she didn't place at CWSF, Sarabelle says the trip was worth all the hard work that went into her project and she has come out a different person.

"I'm already proud of myself for coming this far. I'd say I was a shy person, but if somebody talked to me, I would talk to them. I talk a lot louder now, and I can speak a lot more about things. Before, I couldn't speak as much because it was my first time winning in Winnipeg. But now, I know a lot more, and I know what to say a lot more. And I got to make a lot of new memories with my new friends. I made like five new friends."

Sarabelle has some advice for any students who want to take part in the science fair process.

"Just try your hardest, and even if you're not confident, just act confident. You'll make it. Fake it until you make it. Just ... good luck, it's worth it."



The Value of Science and New Opportunities

Dylan Bercier, a Grade 9 student who attends Lawrence Sinclair Memorial School, attended the Canada-Wide Science Fair in May. He and his partner Dillon Cameron shared their project on the use of Arduino for an obstacle-avoiding robot equipped with ultrasonic alarms and radar.

1. How would you describe science? Is it essential? Why?

Science as a whole, in my opinion, is very important to us. It gives us insight. I am always in awe every time I learn something new.

2. What was the most challenging/enjoyable part of this project?

The most challenging part of my project was learning how to code. It was hard to remember but was an enjoyable experience because I knew I would need it in the future.

3. How did it feel when you found out you were selected?

I was excited but scared at the same time, nonetheless, it was awesome news and a new opportunity.

4. What was your favourite part of the whole trip?

The trip to University of Alberta. The trip there was amazing, and we got to learn loads of stuff. The experience taught and showed so many different paths that I can choose in life.

5. What did you learn from the experience?

My experience showed me that kids and all sorts of people are so kind. I was afraid to ask people questions, but when I did, they were the kindest people.



Dylan Bercier
Regional Gold Medal Winner



the shop

MFNERC's collection of books, posters, multimedia projects, and other materials is growing rapidly. The collection gives attention to First Nations cultures, histories, and languages.



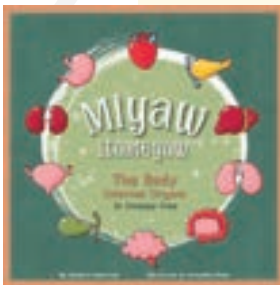
Crops in Manitoba In Dakota

Explore the world of Manitoba crops while learning the Dakota language words. Both teachers and students will appreciate this useful and colourful resource.



Halloween in Lac Brochet in 1970s

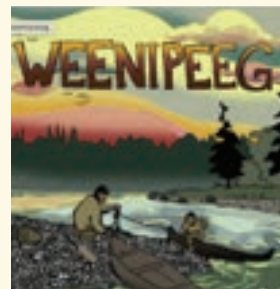
Illustrated by Grade 6 Students of Petit Casimir Memorial School:
Shady Nambienare-Ansanen
Sunrise Moise-Ansanen
Sophia Samuel
Holly Sha-oullie



Miyaw Itameyaw The Body - Internal Organs

This playfully illustrated resource helps learners identify the body's major organs in the Swampy Cree language. A great resource for teaching

human anatomy. It could be used by physical educators, health teachers, classroom instructors, or for learning at home.



Weenipeeg

The name Weenipeeg (or Winnipeg) is known to mean dirty water. But how did it get that name? *Weenipeeg*, a story carried on by Elder Bill Ballantyne, is a children's book that recounts the gripping true events that led to

Winnipeg receiving its name. A journey story at its heart, this beautifully illustrated book will have you on the edge of your seat, while it shares important Traditional Knowledge.



Christmas Words and Flashcards

Students will enjoy this illustrated booklet and flashcards set for learning Christmas language terms. This resource will supplement the libraries of educators and caregivers and support language learning. Available in Lac Brochet Dene, Sayisi Dene, and Dakota.

Visit the online shop
for the entire catalogue
of resources:
www.mfnerc.com/shop

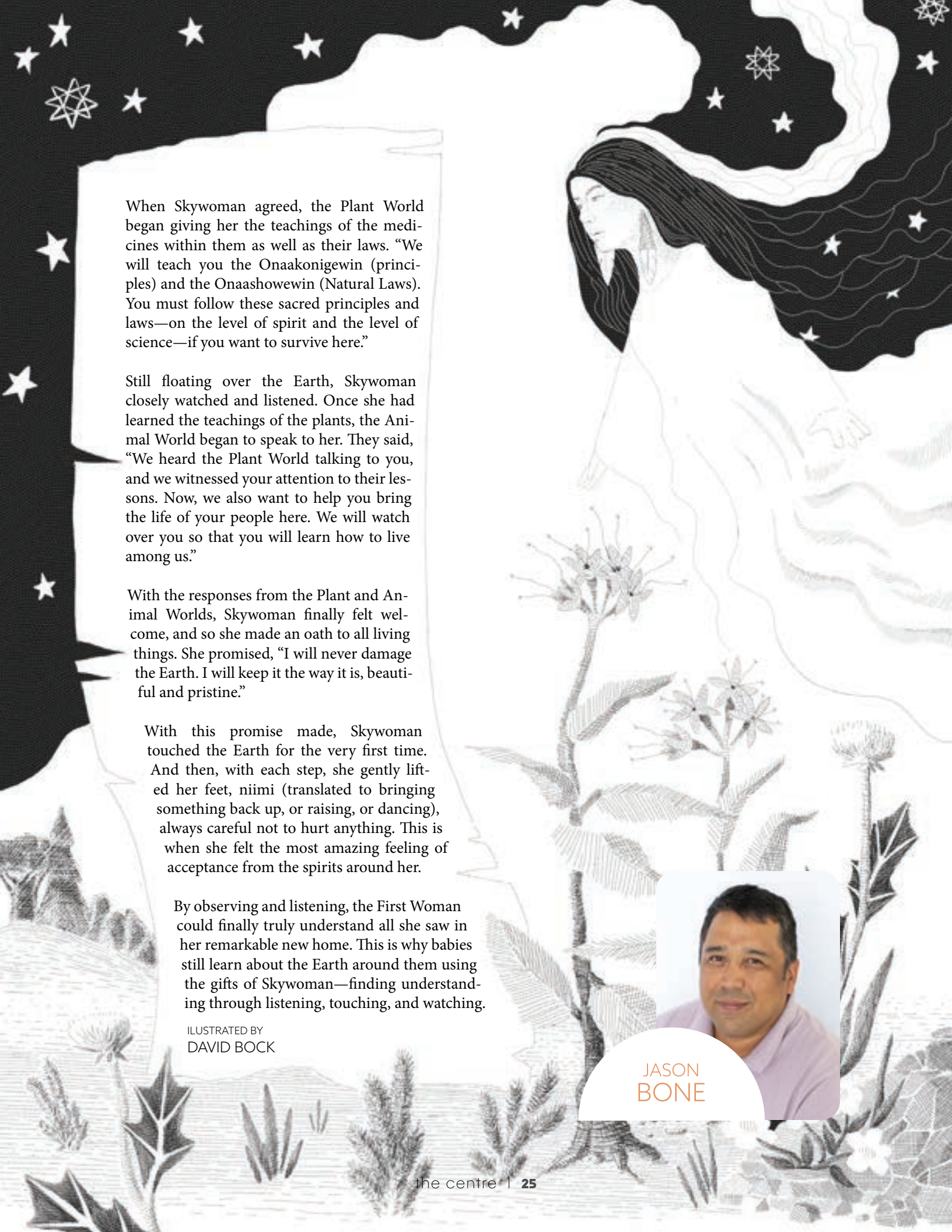
A black and white illustration of a woman with long, flowing hair, identified as Skywoman, floating in the sky. She is looking down towards the Earth. The sky is filled with various star patterns. Below her, the Earth is depicted with a large, detailed plant in the foreground, featuring a thick, gnarled root system and several flowering stalks. Other smaller plants and trees are visible in the background, along with a body of water. The overall style is that of a traditional storybook illustration.

Skywoman Learns & Lands

When she first arrived, Nenaanikwe (Skywoman) floated over the world, not touching it. She saw the great variety of life on Earth and thought, "This is a beautiful place that should never, ever be destroyed." In her travels among the stars, she had never witnessed anything as special as the many different beings of Earth, and this spurred questions for each animal and plant. But nothing would respond to her curiosity. Without a reply from the spirits of the Earth, Skywoman began to lose hope, thinking, "I don't want to be here if I'm not welcome. I should not overstep by inviting myself."

Skywoman had never seen so many unique animals, birds, plants, and fish. She held great respect for the planet, but the lack of communication with the world around her caused her sorrow. She said, "I think I'm going to leave even though I don't want this place discarded or hurt in any way."

Hearing Skywoman's thoughts and feeling her sadness, the Plant World began to speak to her. They said, "We hear you and we will help you. But you must learn how to really, truly understand the teachings we are about to give. Study these lessons and bring them to a level of understanding within your heart, mind, and spirit. Dig deep into what you will learn so that you have complete comprehension of what you are taught and what you are being shown."



When Skywoman agreed, the Plant World began giving her the teachings of the medicines within them as well as their laws. “We will teach you the Onaakonigewin (principles) and the Onaashowewin (Natural Laws). You must follow these sacred principles and laws—on the level of spirit and the level of science—if you want to survive here.”

Still floating over the Earth, Skywoman closely watched and listened. Once she had learned the teachings of the plants, the Animal World began to speak to her. They said, “We heard the Plant World talking to you, and we witnessed your attention to their lessons. Now, we also want to help you bring the life of your people here. We will watch over you so that you will learn how to live among us.”

With the responses from the Plant and Animal Worlds, Skywoman finally felt welcome, and so she made an oath to all living things. She promised, “I will never damage the Earth. I will keep it the way it is, beautiful and pristine.”

With this promise made, Skywoman touched the Earth for the very first time. And then, with each step, she gently lifted her feet, *niimi* (translated to bringing something back up, or raising, or dancing), always careful not to hurt anything. This is when she felt the most amazing feeling of acceptance from the spirits around her.

By observing and listening, the First Woman could finally truly understand all she saw in her remarkable new home. This is why babies still learn about the Earth around them using the gifts of Skywoman—finding understanding through listening, touching, and watching.

ILLUSTRATED BY
DAVID BOCK



JASON
BONE

LET'S SPEAK A LITTLE BIT OF OJIBWE



Bangii'eta

ANISHINAABEMODAA

The podcast *Bangii'eta Anishinaabemodaa* (translated to “Let’s speak a little bit of Ojibwe”) supports second-language learners by modeling learning in a relaxed environment. The podcast’s objective is to teach common phrases and encourage fluency through repetition and conversing in Ojibwemowin. The goal is to instill pride and strengthen First Nations’ identity while learning language, culture, customs, worldview, traditional teachings, protocols, medicines, and about the environment. Special guests invited on the podcast include Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and educators, who provide immense support for language revitalization and acquisition.

When adults learn the language, children have opportunities to use the language at home in addition to learning it at school. In this way, *Bangii'eta Anishinaabemodaa* creates a bridge for the continuation of language learning for children. When learning is supported by all teachers and caregivers in the First Nations, the usage of Ojibwemowin becomes the norm.

The podcast supports second-language speakers in gaining fluency by maximizing everyday language. Judy Doolittle, a fluent speaker, mentors five learners—Rachel Beaulieu, Cynthia Desjarlais, Darcy-Anne Thomas, Tamara Eaker, and Brenda Daniels. They share the journey of learning Ojibwemowin as adults, which includes laughter, making mistakes, and everything else that comes with language learning. The podcast began recording in spring 2023. Episodes are released twice a month and can be found on any podcast streaming service—Spotify, Apple Podcasts, PodBean, etc. Please check the Resource Centre’s webpage and social media platforms to find out when new episodes air.

Darcy-Anne Thomas shares, “I am happy for the opportunity to be a part of the *Bangii'eta Anishinaabemodaa* podcast. I have been around the First Nations languages in Manitoba for many years, yet I speak very little. Participating in the podcast allows me to

learn the language from a fluent speaker. Learning in a group is a lot of fun. We have a lot of laughs and some good-natured teasing, but we support and encourage one another to learn and participate. It’s a great experience!”

Brenda Daniels hopes that by sharing the organic process of language learning from different perspectives and backgrounds, the podcast will encourage others to learn their language while also understanding the importance of First Nations languages.





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