



April 27, 2015

Press Release

For Immediate Release

### Mini Powwow held at Royal Canadian Legion in Corner Brook

April 27, 2015—Corner Brook, NL—More than 120 students, teachers and principals from Humber Elementary and C.C. Loughlin gathered today to celebrate the conclusion of the Mi'kmaq Culture and History Community Project with the first of two mini powwows taking place at the Royal Canadian Legion in Corner Brook this week. They were joined by representatives from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation, partners in the development and delivery of this project, along with the many community volunteers who supported it.

This is the third year for this initiative which covers a large part of the Grade five Social Studies curriculum. Grade five students from Sacred Heart, Humber, C.C. Loughlin, and St. Gerard's Elementary Schools all took part in the project. Over the past eight weeks they have learned about the history of contact between Europeans, the Mi'kmaq and the Beothuk and reflected on their own ancestries, learned about traditional and present day decision-making in Mi'kmaq communities and learned through crafts and cultural teachings about the medicine wheel and regalia. Students were also provided with the materials and guidance needed to make their own rattles or drums which they brought with them to play at the mini powwow.

The Corner Brook Aboriginal Women's Association was on hand to perform a smudging ceremony, and lead the children in several songs. Marlene Farrell, Director with the Qalipu Cultural Foundation also led the group in an opening prayer.

The day of celebrations also included talking circles, storytelling and a special demonstration of Inuit throat singing performed by Lena Onalik. Onalik is one of the parents who attended the mini powwow along with her son, Joseph, a grade five student from C.C. Loughlin.

Students were also treated to a dance lesson by a talented fancy shawl dancer, Julia Blanchard. Blanchard told the students that she learned to dance by observing her elders and experienced dancers and also by travelling around to different powwows and not being afraid to give it a try. Blanchard is a teacher at Abegweit First Nation in Scotchfort, PEI but is currently at home in St. George's enjoying maternity leave with her first child, Layla, who joined her, wooing all the children at the mini powwow.



Jessica Dumont, grade five student from C.C. Loughlin spoke about some of the things she learned in the classroom and her experience at the mini powwow. She said, “we learned about talking circles and what to do in a talking circle, we made rattles and got to decorate them and we learned about the four medicines. This day has been really amazing, it’s so fun!”

Brendan Sheppard, Chief of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation, was in attendance at the event and shared his appreciation for the hard work of the many people involved in the project and coordination of the mini powwow.

“Qalipu western region Vice Chief Kevin Barnes has been so involved in cultural initiatives. Just in this project alone he volunteered several days a week at the local schools. Margaret McKeon the resource person for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, Dwayne Gillam a parent and member of Qalipu, the Aboriginal Women’s Association have also helped to put this together. We are pleased to see all the interest in being involved in Mi’kmaq culture and heritage. Thanks also to the many parents and community volunteers and educators who gave so generously of their time both in the classroom and at today’s event.”

A second powwow for students of Sacred Heart and St. Gerard’s Elementary will be held on Wednesday.

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