



News Release

Students recognize the legacy of residential schools by supporting the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Foundation through an exhibition of learning

For immediate release – October 20, 2020

Red Deer, AB St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School Grade 6 students recognize the legacy of residential schools by showcasing their learning and developing materials (t-shirts, toques, bracelets, posters, etc) to raise funds to support the [Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Foundation](#).

“It is important for students to learn about residential schools and the impacts on the indigenous peoples because the only way to reconcile the past is to know about it, the whole truth. The Grade 6 curriculum focus is democracy. The first topics that students learn about are the pillars of democracy (justice, equity, freedom, representation) and the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens. Terms like injustice, values, laws and perspectives are discussed. Students are taught that laws are created to keep people safe. Residential schools are a true example of injustice. Every year my students figure out, on their own, that equity, freedom, justice and safety did not apply to indigenous peoples,” said Teacher, Charmaine Babey at St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School.

The discussion of residential schools started on Orange Shirt Day. The following week, students read [Secret Path](#), by Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire that tells the story about a boy named Chanie Wenjack who ran away from his residential school at the age of 12.

“Every child has the right to learn about this project so no one forgets about it and can pass on what they learned,” said Fletcher Patton, a student at St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School.

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“It is important to learn about residential schools because kids who attended these schools did not have all the luxuries that we have today,” said Tyson Villagracia, a student at St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School.

“We are so proud of St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School for moving forward and making positive steps in Indigenous education and reconciliation by making connections. These Grade 6 students have learned to acknowledge Indigenous history and put their awareness into action,” said Selena Frizzley, Coordinator of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Support Team at Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools.

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools serves over 10,360 students in 20 schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, and Olds, as well as an at-home learning program. It also supports the learning of over 1095 students in a Traditional Home Education Program. The Division is committed to serving children and parents with a complete offering of learning opportunities delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and within the means of the Division.

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