

## **We are Community – “Wahkohtowin”**

*“Holy Family School system strives to really ‘live holy family’. We are storytellers and storymakers treating all members of our communities as they would like to be treated.*

*This means seeking to understand first!”*

*(G. Keith, Director of Education)*

It is our belief in Holy Family RCSSD #140 that we do need to embrace the meaning of this Cree word, Wahkohtowin, and be *“in good relationship; kinship beyond the immediate family.”* We spend so much of our time learning and leading together, it is best if we consider one another sister or brother.

*There are many moments throughout the year where I am simply taken aback by the reverence that our young people show for Jesus. Whether it be from the good works of our weekly gospel assemblies or our annual Passion play, it's wonderful to see my staff and students truly try their best to walk as His disciples. (Darrell Perras, School-Based Administrator)*

Our annual theme this year took us on a journey to better understand community and the need for us all to be leaders, learners and builders of relationships. We recognized early on that, although four distinct geographical areas, there were many commonly accepted understandings of what a community is, does and provides. Our ‘community’ needed to be one that was deeply rooted in the teachings of our Catholic faith. We needed to ensure that the good news of Our Lord Jesus Christ continued to provide the foundation for all that we do on our Catholic Education mission. We soon found that the challenges and celebrations were very similar across the geographical areas we serve. We were reminded that the message of our theme needed to reach throughout the organization entirely. Our earliest entrant learner would come to know what it means to learn and lead and share with others while our most senior Board of Trustees members would reflect on the same.

*Holy Family is an amazing place to lead, learn and grow. As a life long learner, I am continually inspired by our staff who enthusiastically engage our students in their learning journey and our students who are problem solvers, critical thinkers and innovators. Our future is bright!*

*(Chad Fingler, Superintendent)*

One area to consider - leadership. Whether it would be the sharing of the leadership in planning school masses, assemblies and celebrations or the opening of doors for an after hours movie night, the various citizens of the school community clearly understood the role they played in making it successful. Each community activity needs organizers.

These people generate a plan, gather materials and disseminate key information. Motivators are needed. These people encourage attendance and participation and spread the word. Facilities arrangers have a job to do. These people make sure the seats are available, the presentation technology is working and the sound is of good quality. Hosts play an important role. These people welcome guests, ensure that everything runs smoothly and deal with the challenges that arise.

*I am still relatively new to St. Michael School, so my experience is that of coming into an established family and community. That can be either a blessing or a curse: but in my case it has definitely been a blessing. There was already a community in and around the school of strong leaders and amazing learners. My role has been to foster the leadership of others and to model servant leadership. In any school, there are too many needs and priorities for one person to be the leader in everything. In a large school - over 500 students - leadership must be shared. My role is to clear the path for those staff or students who have an area of expertise or a passion that will benefit our school community. I believe that it is only through this shared leadership that each individual can serve the community to the best of their ability and we thrive as a community. (Dean Loberg, School-Based Administrator)*

The incredible fact is that all of these roles are honoured and filled whenever anything takes place in Holy Family. The best part is, they might be filled by staff, students or other members. One can never be too sure where to direct the credit for a successful event. It might be that a student group such as Student Leadership Committee or perhaps the School Community Council made up of parents or the office staff of the school, principal and administrative assistant, have taken the lead and made great things happen for all participants. The key message, be sure and show gratitude and appreciation. Pause and give thanks when you are part of a community that succeeds by getting all jobs done!

*“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6) The success of our students at Sacred Heart School/École Sacré Coeur is a shared cooperation between home, school and community. We work together with families and through partnerships to give our students opportunities to grow, reflect and experience learning that they may not otherwise have. Our dream as teachers and leaders is to be able to build a foundation within each of our children that is full of faith, hope and love. We work diligently to see each and every child achieve their dreams which in years to come will continue to support the growth and development of our wonderful community. (Amber Hilstrom, School-Based Administrator)*

The second key area of consideration - learning. Our students are engaged in a deeper learning model where pathways to achieving an outcome are created. These pathways

involve the teacher and student planning together for the achievement of the outcome. Student voice dictates whether the experience will involve a change in environment, the leveraging of digital technologies, a variety of learning strategies or perhaps even a learning partnership. We have seen students more excited about their studies than ever before. They have an increased sense of ownership that, combined with the values of their faith development, allows them to celebrate deeply and fully the level of achievement that is earned.

*I am always amazed by the welcome I receive when I, as a central office employee, visit any one of the schools in our division. It doesn't matter whether I am greeted by one of the littlest learners or energized adolescents or caring adults, I am always made to feel welcome and respected. I believe that our schools do a terrific job of teaching everyone to identify the Christ-child in each of us and help us feel loved. (Lynn Colquhoun, Coordinator)*

Finally, the task of building relationships so that we are truly 'one with all'. Students and staff, through the efforts of dedicated central office staff, are provided with an opportunity to embrace truth and reconciliation and grow in honour of and respect for our indigenous nations. 'We are all treaty people' is commonly heard within school buildings and at events. We reach out in stewardship of our time, talents and treasure to meet the needs of our neighbours and friends who might not have the ability to achieve on their own. We celebrate those who give great effort and support us in our education journey. We recognize the value of having our parish communities participate in and provide support for our Catholic education objectives and goals. We are indeed community and together we are 'going deeper' in good relationship and kinship.