

Regina Catholic Schools: Let Your Light Shine

Regina Catholic Schools theme for the 2018-2019 school year is "Let Your Light Shine." We are truly blessed to have wonderful students and staff who do exactly that.

As part of the new provincial Catholic Studies Curriculum, students are required to complete a Christian Action Project. Some grade 12 students from Archbishop M. C. O'Neill Catholic High School decided that they wanted to put their faith into action so they planned and organized a purse/backpack project. The students were responsible for collecting essential toiletry items, Kleenex, razors, makeup and socks to fill purses and backpacks. They created social media posts and posters to create awareness and asked for sponsorship from various businesses. When all the donations were gathered, the students delivered 130 purses and backpacks to the Carmichael Outreach Center along with four new car seats donated by Toys R Us, mugs from Starbucks, make up from Shoppers Drug Mart, coupons to McDonalds and donated clothing. These students are truly living out Christ's message that "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt: 25:40)

November is a time to focus on the members of Jesus' family whose sacrifice gave us the freedoms that we enjoy. École St. Elizabeth's Club du Souvenir decorated cookies donated by Sinfully Sweet Bakery to share with our veterans. This not-very-secret mission called, "Operation Sprinkles" was a lot of sweet smelling fun, as well as a great opportunity to think of those who sacrificed for us. The cookies were delivered to veterans living in 13 different care homes in Regina by members of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Students from St. Francis Community School, St. Joan of Arc School and St. Timothy School honoured those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom at Regina's 2nd annual No Stone Left Alone ceremony at the Regina Cemetery in the Field of Honour. Students laid poppies on the headstones of the fallen and remembered them through song and prayer. After the ceremony, the students toured local military museums at the Royal Canadian Legion and at the Regina Armouries. The reverence and prayerfulness demonstrated by the students truly showed that they are followers of the Prince of Peace.

The beautiful Remembrance Day services held across the school division ensures that the sacrifice of our brave veterans and fallen will never be forgotten. The work of our dedicated teachers ensures that a sad chapter in Canadian history will not be forgotten. Chelsea Chomos, a teacher at St. Theresa School, reflects on how things have changed since she was a student taking Social Studies and History classes. Chelsea remembers hearing only selective bits of Canadian history "the good bits, the pieces that made me oh so proud to be Canadian." She never learned "that Canada had slavery at one time, or that Canada refused ships carrying Jewish refugees, ships that made their way to our shoreline only to be sent straight back to the hands that would kill them in concentration camps. I never learned that life existed in Canada before the Europeans came, and that that life was good. I never learned about the damage that was done to the first inhabitants of Canada, the Indigenous Peoples, after the Europeans arrived and in the centuries that followed."

Chelsea says that her "blindness was removed during my first year of university when I started Indian Studies 100. I didn't know that this class would change everything I thought I knew about the world around me, and be the driving force behind my teaching. The more I learned, the more I felt compelled to pass on to others and the more I questioned, "Why didn't I learn about any of this in school?"

Thankfully, things have changed for the better. As Chelsea notes “I am very proud to say that working for Regina Catholic Schools, the question I had after taking Indian Studies 100, ‘Why don’t kids learn about this in school?’ has become irrelevant. I went into a grade eight classroom the other day to teach the students about residential schools and their first reaction was a groan, so as to say, ‘not again.’ This reaction told me that by grade eight, students had been hearing about residential schools so much that they were actually getting tired of it. And how great is that? “

Chelsea concludes with “teaching students about Indigenous Peoples of Canada and their history is not something that only the lucky teachers that happened to take Indian Studies 100 teach; it is something that every teacher, at every grade level, teaches. It is all over our curriculum. It is in our professional development and at our institutes. It is in our prayers, masses and liturgies. It’s everywhere.”

The dedication and passion of Chelsea and all our teachers to educate students about the injustices suffered by Indigenous Peoples is having a very positive effect. Students are learning that too often Indigenous Peoples have been treated as the least of the members of Jesus’ family and that this injustice, this sin, needs to be addressed. As a result, students are deciding to take simple, concrete steps towards the goal of Truth and Reconciliation. Not just our students, but our entire school division has committed to Truth and Reconciliation. It is the right thing to do, the just thing to do and is another example of how we “let our light shine” so that “all may give glory to our Father in heaven”. (Matt 5: 16).

