



## Exemplary Environmental Leadership/Sustainability Program or Initiative

School Board \_\_\_ Moosonee District School Area Board

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Name of Program/Initiative \_\_\_ The 7 Teachings Character Education Program

Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative

### Description of Program/Initiative

Student Engagement and Community Connections: First Nations Cree culture is holistic and inclusive and therefore environmental sustainability is part of the overall value system. The 7 Teachings emphasize the interconnectedness of humans and the land and is based on the traditional Aboriginal values of Respect, Courage, Love, Humility, Wisdom, Honesty and Truth. Classroom initiatives include integrating elements of the Teachings into the curriculum and organizing special activities called Aboriginal Focus Groups, where community members come into the school to teach traditional Aboriginal skills. Another example is the Kindergarten Community Garden, which was put into place at the end of the last school year. During the winter months, Grades 7 and 8 students travel to Camp Onakawana in order to increase their environmental knowledge through hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering. Chris Sutherland, Shabastik, comes into the school to give presentations to students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. Chris is a First Nation Hip Hop performer, and graduate of our school, who integrates traditional Cree cultural knowledge and the 7 Teachings into his work. Funding for this program comes from the Ontario Ministry of Education First Nation, Inuit, Metis Education proposal, the school budget, and fund-raising. The Moosonee Lions Club made a generous donation to the Grade 7 class towards their trip to Onakawana. For more information on Camp Onakawana, see the write-up by author Joseph Boyden at the following link: [news.nationalpost.com/2014/03/07/joseph-boyden/](http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/03/07/joseph-boyden/)

### What has been the Impact on Student Learning?

Students returning from Camp Onakawana continue to use their experiences at the Camp to inform their learning. In addition, teachers report that all students benefit from the relationship building that takes place at the Camp and which continues to flourish long after the students return to the classroom. The traditional knowledge and skills that they learn at the Camp, and that all the students engage in through school-based activities, increases their respect for their own cultural traditions and emphasizes the importance of walking "lightly on the land" in order to preserve the boreal forest for future generations. Overall, the connection between good relationships, whether child to child, child to adult, or child to the environment, has resulted in observable changes in the behaviours and attitudes of many of our students.