



NOVEMBER, 2020



REGIONAL UPDATE

Monthly Newsletter of the Tri-County Regional Centre for Education

NEWS & FEATURES

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Learning in the Great Outdoors

Learning knows no boundaries. It can occur anywhere, at any time, and is not restricted to four walls and a roof. This year, we've seen numerous examples of outdoor learning thanks to Nova Scotia's Back to School Plan, which encourages school activities to take place outside as much as possible due to COVID-19.

Even before the pandemic, the benefits of outdoor learning have been well documented. Studies have shown that outdoor learning promotes physical activity, fosters teamwork, develops a sense of self, increases confidence, and inspires creative thinking and problem-solving skills. These competencies are exactly the outcomes Kevin Holland and Francine Hopkins are seeing achieved by their students in the Leadership 12 course at Barrington Municipal High School.

This class is an opportunity for students to take on a leadership role in the school while combining outdoor education and event organization," explains Holland who co-teaches the course with Hopkins.

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Leadership 12 Course Improves Teamwork, Creativity & Confidence

- Francine Hopkins

"This class is an opportunity for students to take on a leadership role in the school while combining outdoor education and event organization," explains Holland who co-teaches the course with Hopkins. "It's a chance for them to explore different things they may not otherwise have a chance to try."

The terrific fall weather has already allowed the class to explore a variety of outdoor learning activities. They've been working on a biking and canoeing unit and have been spending many days on the Barrington River. Under the current COVID-19 restrictions, transportation for field trips is not permitted, however, because the Leadership 12 course incorporates biking into the coursework, the students are able to bike to their canoeing locations.

Holland and Hopkins say the biggest change they see in the students enrolled in this course, is their sense of teamwork. They believe this skill is enhanced because they are outside of the traditional classroom and working in a natural setting with real life challenges. "We've seen huge changes and improvements in self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment," says Hopkins. "The students often say, we can't do this or we can't do that. For example, 'we can't portage that canoe,' then there is a huge feeling of accomplishment once they've done it."

The course includes a mix of indoor learning as well. Students learn what makes a good leader, organizational skills, as well as event planning and management, and they are responsible for a variety of school-based events. There's also a volunteer component, each student completes 25 hours of volunteer community work. Students have volunteered at local food banks and have assisted with parade planning.

Holland and Hopkins say the lingering winter weather won't slow down their outdoor learning. In fact, they have a variety of winter activities planned and hope the weather will cooperate. "We hope to go curling, snowshoeing, winter trekking and hiking, cross country skiing and pond skating, if it gets cold enough," says Holland.

This is the second year Leadership 12 has been offered at Barrington High School. Students who are interested in taking Leadership 12 next year, are encouraged to speak to their teachers and complete an application to be accepted.



A Message from the Regional Executive Director

Welcome to November. Teachers, students, and families have now settled back into the daily school routine. As we move through the 2020-2021 school year, we continue to focus on the three pillars of our System Improvement Plan: well-being, literacy, and mathematics. Even in the midst of a pandemic, our goal continues to be to enhance the academic achievement and social emotional development of our students.

Over the last two months, I've had a chance to connect with a number of schools while maintaining public health guidelines and have seen first-hand the commitment to these key priorities. You will see examples highlighted in this monthly report, like the front page feature on the Leadership 12 course at Barrington Municipal High School. Kevin Holland and Francine Hopkins have established strong relationships with the students in that class which has resulted in a group of highly engaged students.

I was recently invited to participate in one of their classes and was so impressed to see the group's teamwork skills in action as we biked to the Barrington River and enjoyed an afternoon canoeing.

Once again, I invite you to follow us on Facebook and Twitter where we will share the amazing work happening throughout the region and keep you up to date on the latest health and safety protocols related to education and COVID-19.

Take care,
Dr. Chris Boulter

Regional Executive Director of Education
TCRCE
Twitter: @drboulter

"I've had a chance to connect with a number of schools while maintaining public health guidelines."

-Dr. Chris Boulter



Pictured above, Dr. Chris Boulter canoes with BMHS Leadership 12 teacher, Kevin Holland.

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS



Meadowfields Consolidated school students work on their drumming as part of their music class to mark Mi'kmaq History Month (above).

Students at Port Maitland Consolidated Elementary School make dreamcatchers to celebrate Mi'kmaq Heritage Month (left).



Students at Digby Elementary enjoyed a visit from the Digby Fire Department as part of National Fire Prevention Week (above).

Grade 8 band students at Maple Grove Education Centre make music outdoors (left).



"It is an ongoing project that we will contribute to throughout the school year."

- Arthur Hatt

SMBA Honours the REDress Project

Saint Mary's Bay Academy students recently honoured the REDress Project as part of Arthur Hatt's Mi'kmaw Studies 11 class. Their display is a tribute to Métis artist, Jaime Black and her project to draw awareness to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Mr. Hatt says his students were first introduced to the REDress Project in the classroom and then they were provided with an opportunity for this experiential learning, creating a lasting legacy for future classes. "This year, 14 dresses were hung in the surrounding trees and we are currently building tables and benches for the site," says Mr. Hatt. "It is an ongoing project that we will contribute to throughout the school year."



Students work on the REDress project as a tribute to missing & murdered Indigenous women.

The red dresses were brought in by Kim Gaudet (Teacher Assistant) and students worked on the project, both creatively and physically. The students cleared a new path behind the school to create a walkway to the memorial.

One of the students who participated was 14-year-old, Cadence Cromwell. Cadence says the REDress Project brought to her attention just how many Indigenous girls were lost, disappeared, or murdered. She also notes the dresses in the forest may look creepy but they have helped to validate their learnings.

Mr. Hatt says he was drawn to Jamie Black's website and her REDress Project after researching issues and concerns of First Nations People. Creating their own version of her display, was a perfect fit for his class because it incorporated creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and spirituality. Mr. Hatt also says this project has highlighted an awareness of a long-term and devastating issue. "There were multiple takeaways for the students," he notes. "Lasting effects of colonialism, the effects of systemic racism, a connection to lost souls, and that we all have a right to live in freedom and safety."

Special Recognition for SMBA Teacher



One of our TCRCE teachers has been awarded with the highly coveted, Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

Congratulations to Saint Mary's Bay Academy's (SMBA), Sean Merrett (pictured left) for receiving the 2020 Prime Minister's Certificate of Achievement Award for Teaching Excellence in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Sean Merrett is just one of 18 Canadian teachers to receive this year's recognition and there's only one other Nova Scotian teacher on the list. Mr. Merrett teaches Sociology 12, Food Science 12, Global Politics 12, Global Geography 12, Physical Education 11, Agrifoods 11 & Physical Education 12.

One of Mr. Merrett's highlighted achievements is SMBA's Experiential School of Excellence. This initiative is part of TCRCE's Health Promoting Schools began as a simple student project to build a short trail system on school grounds and Mr. Merrett led its expansion into a major learning site that now includes outdoor classrooms, a greenhouse, gardens, orchards, maple syrup production and more.

Claudine Coggins, SBMA Principal, says Mr. Merrett is extremely deserving of the award, not only for his on-going and relentless work with their Experiential School of Excellence, but also for his work with STEM in the classroom and for his reflective practice-to-action teaching approach. "Sean uses technology to engage his students with nature and provides opportunities to learn about our environment through multiple facets," she says. "Sean's dedication, proactive and collaborative approach have created a space and place where students want to be and is making a difference in the lives of students!"

WELCOME DES DRAGONS!



There's a unique tradition at Digby Elementary School - Hatch Day! This year, they took their hatching ceremony virtual and streamed it throughout the school so all students could welcome the new dragons to their den!



They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery! Students at Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School dressed up as Mr. Veinot for Halloween (above).

Pre-primary students at Plymouth Elementary love spending time outdoors (left).

Have you Downloaded the COVID Alert App?



COVID Alert is a free exposure notification app. The app lets you know if you may have been exposed to COVID-19. You can also use the app to let others know if you test positive without sharing any personal information.

Downloading the app is quick and easy. If your child has a cell phone, ensuring they have the app on their phones is an important step in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our schools.



Winter Weather Reminder

With winter approaching, remember to check our website, social media, or listen to your local radio station, for updates around school cancellations due to weather or road conditions.

THE HEALTHY *Hangout*



We know that this is a very challenging time for students, families, and the whole school community. Staying healthy has been top of mind for many of us during COVID-19, but our wellbeing is more than keeping the virus at bay. Keeping your body and mind active is also a priority for TCRCE.

Here are a few fun and engaging resources that will help you stay healthy and active as we MOVE out of fall and into winter!



Kids Run Club at Home
kidsrunclub.ca/1053-2

BOKS Canada
At Home Movement and Play Resource
www.bokskids.ca/boks-free-sign-up/

Physical & Health Education Canada
phecanada.ca/programs/phe-learning-centre