



OZHAAWASHKWAA ANIMIKII-BINESHI

Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun

Freeze up 2024

FREEZE UP AT THE AKI CENTRE

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AUTUMN HARVESTS

Each year, autumns' pace feels both like slowing down and staying steady. Autumn is felt by opportunities to harvest foods, medicines and herbs, and to harvest seeds to save for next year. It comes with the responsibilities of utilizing what is harvested, sharing it, and storing it for the winter. Miigwech to all who helped harvest tobacco, sage, carrots, beets, potatoes, onions, garlic, herbs, and seeds so that we may share and be nourished!



Potato Harvest



Ground Cherry Harvest



Indigenous Seed Harvesting

CULTURAL EDUCATION - OJIBWEBILINGUAL PROGRAM

It's always exciting to see these K-5 language students! Coming 4 times during the year, they are now experts in the ways of the Aki Centre. Our days start with connecting to what's happening on the Land and what we are noticing from the Earth, plants, and animals. We follow seasonal cycles and learn about the 13 Moons Calendar. September brought critter dipping, harvesting from the gardens, language lessons, fire building/safety, and games, including hide-and-seek in the tallgrass restoration! November/December visits connected to Gashkadino Giizis/Freezing Water Moon and the noticing of how the Land is preparing for winter, hibernation, brumation, and sleep. These experts in the kitchen made Rabbit or Venison Stew, Bannock, and roasted veggies (from the garden), enjoyed playing in the freshly fallen snow, and were the FIRST on the toboggan hill this year!



CULTURAL EDUCATION - MIDDLE YEARS

We are happy to welcome the Middle Years Cultural Education Youth and Educators to the Aki Centre! First visits at the Aki Centre were held over October and November, and students began connecting and re-connecting with the Centre. They participated in fire starting, making birch baskets and slingshots, painting, playing games, cooking, and hide work (building frames, making & applying brain paste, stretching, washing and wringing hides). Can't wait to see you again!



CULTURAL EDUCATION - SENIOR YEARS

Senior Years Cultural Credit came to the Centre in October to learn Tipi Teachings with Elder Mark Hall and Tipi Joe and how to set up and take down the Tipi. They helped to harvest vegetables and seeds, spread compost on garden beds, and learned about Indigenous food systems, In November they learned Drum teachings and making with Elder Derek Courchene and Elder Wayne Manningway and prepared food together. Maples Cultural Credit learned about animal harvesting with Mr Demarchuk and Elder Mark Hall.

Miigwech to all the youth who participated with enthusiasm, generosity and respect!
Miigwech to Elder Derek, Elder Mark, Elder Wayne and Tipi Joe for all you gifted our community!



SWEAT LODGE CEREMONY PREPARATIONS

Last spring, Senior Years Students learned Sweat Lodge teachings from Elder Derek and built the Lodge over four days. Preparations are ongoing, recently Elder Derek and Students brought the grandfather rocks to the Centre, and stacked the firewood. In late October, Career Ready Building Trades Students generously offered their hands to raise the canvas wall tent over the Lodge to provide shelter from the winter winds. Now the Sweat Lodge is cozy inside the wall tent, located on the north side of the greenhouse. Miigwech to all who have helped! And, thank you to last year's Teacher's Idea Fund for the means to support these ceremonies.



Caring for the tarps after rain



Setting up the wall tent



STORYTELLING AND INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

We had warm gatherings on Nov 13th and 15th to unveil and celebrate the signage. In attendance were many guests, from community members, Trustees, Superintendents, Students, S OSD staff, and families. Thank you for celebrating with us.

Over 3 years, we engaged in a collaborative and multi-generational process to create signage that centres Indigenous voices. These signs offer stories of the Earth, language, and culture delivered through an Indigenous worldview that envisions a good life for all.

Elder Mary Courchene and Elder Dan Thomas are the voices and storytellers with whom you will walk alongside as you journey to experience the land and the stories within.

Text, audio (QR code), and graphic artistry carry the story that is echoed by the land that surrounds you. "Look, listen, learn, live", the Elders remind us.

They are based on the following themes:

- Welcome Kiosk: Mino Bimaadiziwin, Importance of names and language, Sacred Teachings
- Nibi / Water. "My Life"
- Mashkode / Grassland. "Strong Heart"
- Maizhaweakaamik / A Long, Long Time Ago
- Ma'iigiziik / Strangers Came to Town
- Naanagaatch Giiga-Bimosemin / Softly We Will Walk
- Baakichigewinan / Legacy "What will you take, and what will you leave behind?"
- N'daanikoobijigaanag / Continuity of Life's Journey

We will be sharing a full newsletter on this installation alone, coming soon!

For visiting classes, know that we have an iPad and portable speaker to utilize during your time with the signs and stories. We also provide follow up/reflection resources which allow you to access the panel images and audio from within your classroom should you need more time with the stories after you leave.



LENDING LIBRARY

A friendly reminder that we have our Lending Library posted on our Portal Page [here](#), with items such as roasting sticks, cast iron pans, grain mill, snow saws, garden tools as well as items to gift such as seeds, herbs, teas. For more information, check out the link!



MIIGWECH TO THE ELDERS, KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS, GUESTS AND HELPERS

Each month we are honoured to spend time with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and guests who facilitate our learning, help us to build a healthy community, nourish us with their words and experiences, and bring a whole lot of fun and laughter to our times together. We'd like to acknowledge all who gifted us with their time, their stories, their teachings and skills so far this year:

Elder Derek Courchene

Elder Lorie Thompson

Elder Mark Hall

Elder Wayne Manningway

Tipi Joe aka Joe Lanceley (and Julio)

Corey Demarchuk

Jon Ellison

Sabrina Leister

Career Ready Building Trades for helping with:

Signage installation, Compost Living Fence, assistance with the Sweat Lodge Wall Tent, & Winterizing the greenhouse

Everyone who helps to compost

Everyone who has helped here to scrape a hide, plant a tree/a vegetable/ an Indigenous plant, to spreadcompost or mulch, to weed, to harvest, to make soup/snacks/meals...MIIGWECH!



WINTER STORIES

With Winter Solstice upon us, freeze up past, and a blanket of snow on the soil, we are in the time of year for storytelling.

Sharing stories with each other peer to peer and listening to Elders and Knowledge Keepers share stories, we can experience how stories themselves become alive to the listener. Stories help us to know our histories, our identities, and the world around us, as well our role in this world. They carry lessons to learn from, to reflect upon, and to guide us to live a good life together.

There are many storytellers and stories in our communities!
Here are a few stories you can connect to in classrooms as a place to start:

Elder Dan Thomas - [How Fisher Brought back the Seasons](#) (click to link) and [The Winter-Maker, Biboonike-inini](#)

Edna Manitowabi - [Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter](#)

Elder Wilfred Buck - [What the Winter Solstice Means in Cree Tradition](#) and [The Story of the Northern Lights](#)

COMPOST CHECK-UP

Thank you to all the compost collectors in schools!

All Seven Oaks schools and Centres are participating in Composting!

New this year is a greater shift and uptake in school-based composting, where composting is happening right on the school yard.

Amber Trails and RF Morrison are continuing to compost at school.

HC Avery has expanded their school's onsite composting capacity.

Ecole Riviere Rouge and Collicutt started composting on their school sites last year and are continuing this year.

Templeton, James Nisbet and West St Paul school started composting in their school's sites this year.

Congratulations on all your hard work and commitments!



Awards and Recognition

There is no better thank you than to see the land respond to our care and to hear the voices of children and youth express their thanks for days at the Aki Centre. This fall, however, we received some unexpected recognition and are grateful for the kindness that has been shown.

On November 20th, Ozhaawashkwaa Animikii-Bineshi Aki Onji Kinimaagae' Inun was awarded the Inspire Guiding the Journey Award for an Organization.

On December 2nd, we were honoured to be recognized by MLA JD Devgan who dedicated his Members' Statement to recognizing the Centre's achievements and the importance of our collective work both in and with community. We recognize that we don't do this work alone, To all who have supported us, given us hope and belief, thank you! We do this work together.



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Social Media Update

Our Instagram handle is @akicentre (no longer @7oaksgrows)



Our YouTube channel is back up and running under a new handle @AkiCentre



We are grateful to our partners and funders:

