



Connect Charter School:

Partners in Place

Chiila Elementary and Connect Charter School students walk to MRU on April 19.



Partners In Place: Building Communities Through Experiential Learning, represents a first step along the path to reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbours. Connect Charter School forged a partnership with the Tsuut'ina Education Department, Mount Royal University, and the Outdoor Council of Canada, to collaborate on teaching, learning and leading. Supported by a generous grant from the Calgary Foundation, Partners In Place has created a long term, reciprocal relationship between our schools.

As a lead-up to the Indigenous Artists In Residence program, Anthony Starlight - a respected Elder from Tsuut'ina Nation - came in and spoke with each class in the school about the importance of storytelling and understanding your sense of place. The project kicked off immediately following spring break, with three Tsuut'ina Nation artists leading students



Students from Connect holding signs at the powwow.

through symbolic art projects including beading, painting, and leatherwork. The project culminated with two striking and culturally significant murals created by Connect students: one of the murals will live at Connect, the other at Chiila Elementary School on the Tsuut'ina Nation. These murals express the trust and understanding that has been developed through the partnership between our schools.



Tsuut'ina Nation dancers performing the old-style fancy shawl dance.

On April 19th, students from Connect Charter School and Tsuut'ina Education met in Lakeview to walk together across the 37th Street interchange to Mount Royal University, in a symbolic walk that demonstrated the deep bonds of this partnership. Over 1000 guests including students, dignitaries, and Elders, congregated at Mount Royal University for a

Keynote speaker Amy Demarest addresses parents April 19. In the background is one of the murals created during the Artist in Residence program at Connect Charter.



presentation style powwow, which included performances by Tsuut'ina dancers, drummers, and singers. Throughout the powwow, emcee Hal Eagletail explained the significance of different dances and the detailing on the dancers' regalia. Hal's enthusiastic demeanor and contagious gusto had students and attendees commenting on the 'rock concert' energy at the powwow.

A Parent Symposium was held later that evening at Connect Charter School. Parents were invited to attend a keynote address by place-based education expert, Amy Demarest, who led a discussion on the four elements of place-based education (experience, subject, place, and service). Guest speaker Albi Sole, Executive Director of the Outdoor Council of Canada, spoke to the group about the roots of physical literacy. The Parent Symposium is available for viewing at https://youtu.be/laK4Dx2F_6A



Break out session at Educators Symposium, April 20 .

Partners in Place culminated in Connect Charter School hosting the Partners in Place Educators Symposium, focusing on place-based education and Indigenous ways of teaching, learning, and knowing. Amy Demarest once again facilitated a discussion on the four elements of place-based education - experience, subject, place, and service. The group then dispersed to attend one of 10 breakout sessions offered in the morning. Teachers took part in diverse sessions including *Learning math from place: What does it mean to circle*, led by Dr. Gladys Sternberg from Mount Royal University and Courtney Fox from Tsuut'ina Education Department. Participants commented that they were impressed with being immersed in practicing the different circle activities during the session,



Elder Anthony Starlight conducts a tipi raising session for educators on April 20 at Connect Charter School.

rather than just hearing the explanation. Other popular sessions included *Relationships and School Culture*, *Tsuut'ina Language 101*, and *Tipi Raising*. Tsuut'ina Education Chef Carrie Dodginghorse and her crew catered a lunch of stew, bannock, fry bread, and an array of salads and desserts, and symposium attendees were also able to sample an array of traditional Indigenous snacks including pemmican, berry soup, and Indian popcorn.

After lunch, guest speaker Albi Sole, Executive Director of the Outdoor Council of Canada, guided a group discussion on *Physical Literacy and Outdoor Activity*. Afternoon sessions ranged from *Place, Pedagogy and Partnership: Shared Voices in Socioecological Connectivity*, *The Power of Place: Cultivating Inquiry With/In*, and *Through Nature and Fun Environmental Activities in your Schoolyard*. One of the most memorable sessions of the day was Storytelling led by Gerald Meguinis, who held his session in the outdoor Tipi. "I love story telling," explained a Connect Charter School staff member, "It's something everyone can benefit from, and Gerald was amazing."

Thanks to talented session leaders, committed staff, and student leadership volunteers, the Educators Symposium was a true success. Connect Charter School is well positioned for the next step in the project, which is to continue to build the partnership Tsuut'ina Education, and keep the rich conversations flowing.

To review some of the media coverage of the Partners in Place: Building Communities Through Experiential Learning, follow the links below.



CTV News interviewing Dr. Butterfield on April 19.

Photos by:

Denise Kitagawa (@GeoKs, mrs_geok)

Neil Zeller ([http://](http://neilzellerphotography.zenfolio.com/)

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<https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/students-from-calgary-and-tsuutina-share-traditions-create-mural-1.3894563>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/tsuutina-powwow-charter-reconciliation-1.4627273>

<https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1375530&binId=1.1201914&playlistPageNum=1>

<http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/charter-school-partners-with-tsuutina-for-symbolic-walk-indigenous-awareness>

<http://calgarysun.com/news/local-news/calgary-weather/wcm/e0484d27-41a0-457a-bb81-3773645dc2d9>



Tsuut'ina Nation artist and dancer Nathan Meginius performs at the powwow on April 19.