

Winnipeg Adult Education Centre



Sustaining Culture: Waaywayeyaa Gitikan/Circle Garden

Winnipeg Adult Education Centre
310 Vaughan St.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 2N8
947-1674

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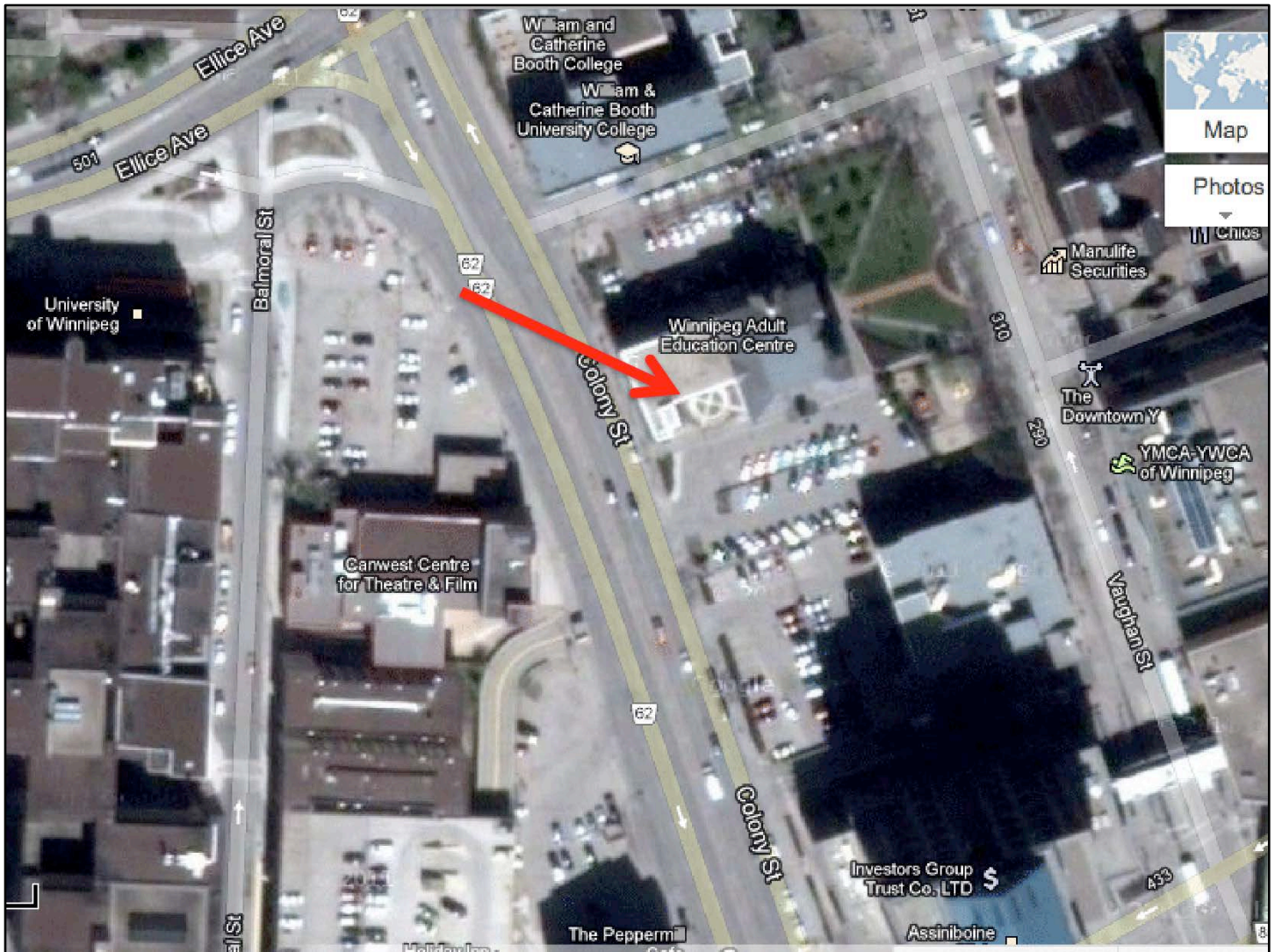


Introduction

Dr. Heather Robinson envisioned a Medicine Wheel garden several years ago. We began planning in earnest after a meeting in October 2007.

An intensive collaborative process followed involving students, staff and neighbours, all guided by Dave Courchene Jr., who accepted tobacco to act as our guiding elder.

Sustainability is woven throughout the Aboriginal belief system. It is said that in whatever you do, be mindful of the effect on not only the next generation, but the the effect on the seventh generation – our great-grandchildren’s great-grandchildren’s children. And with that consideration, we proceeded mindfully in the development of all aspects of the garden.



We required letters of supports from all our neighbours, and as you can see from this Google Map, we're situated in a very dense area of the city.

We consider our circle garden as a sacred space – even in this busy urban setting.



We received overwhelming support from our funders as demonstrated by the donor stone, which is a permanent feature of the garden.

Sustainable Development Priority Areas

Socio-Cultural	Environmental	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human rights Peace and human security Justice Gender equality Cultural diversity and intercultural understanding Community and culture Health HIV/AIDS Governance Demographics Equity and rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water • energy • agriculture • biodiversity and habitat conservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fish • forests • air Climate change Rural transformation Sustainable urbanization Disaster prevention and mitigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty reduction Corporate responsibility and accountability Market economy Energy efficiency and conservation Consumption and waste management Economic performance Agricultural viability Mining Employment Education

- From the Manitoba Education for Sustainable Development Website and based on the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development model

Sustainable development means demonstrating that a new initiative meets the requirements of all of the three priority areas. And in the case of the Circle Garden, even though our main focus was the socio-cultural factors, care was taken in its development to make sure that it not only did no damage to the environment or local economy, but that wherever possible it followed the principals of sustainability in those areas as well.

This short presentation will highlight how the garden honours cultural diversity, human rights, community, and intercultural understanding.



The protocol and processes we followed during the development of the garden are consistent with sustaining and honouring cultural diversity.

This picture was taken at the blessing ceremony & feast. Dave Courchene Jr. advised us that it was important to offer tobacco on the site of the garden and host a feast before construction began.



This is a picture of one of our students who has been part of the circle garden committee from its beginning, even though he's no longer a student at our school. He's offering tobacco on the day that we dug up the existing daylilies.



One of the tenets of the Aboriginal worldview is that it's important to use everything, especially in regards to animal and plant life. The daylilies were dug and carried off by staff and students to be planted in yards and gardens.



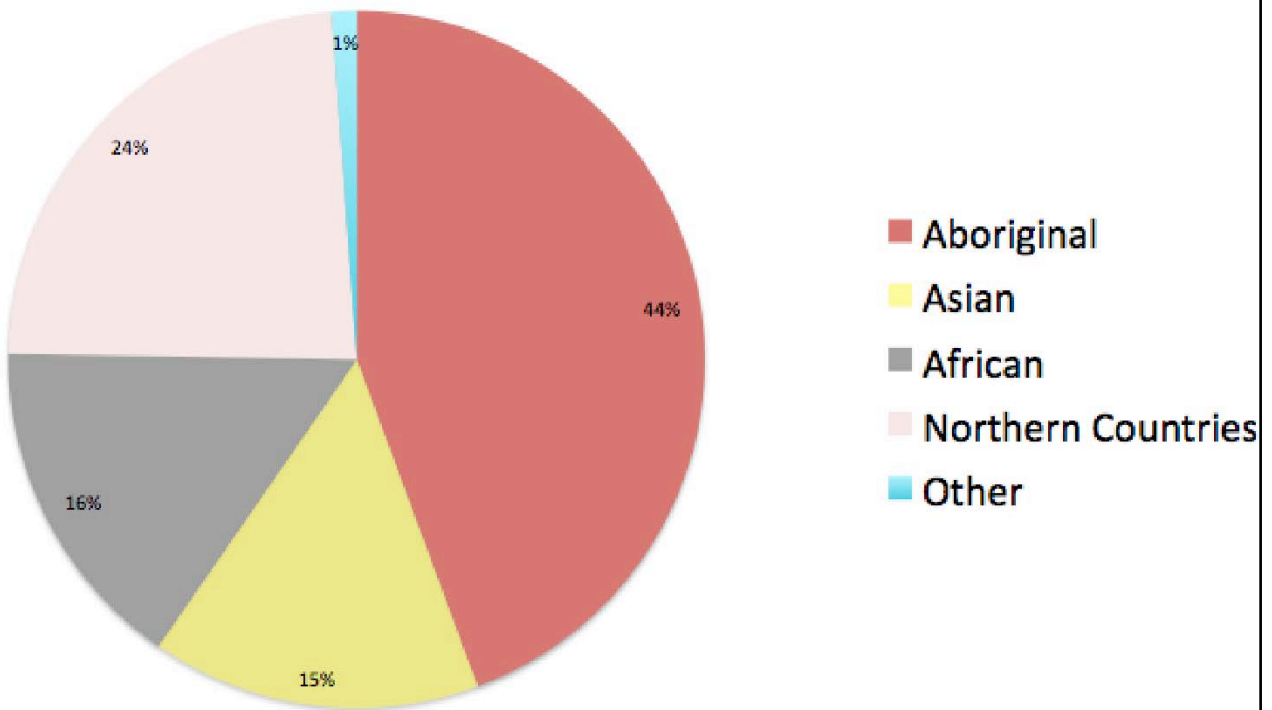
Human Rights

Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 1 “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right.” The circle is a symbol of equality – everyone sits the same distance from the center and there is no “head of the table” or “front of the room”.

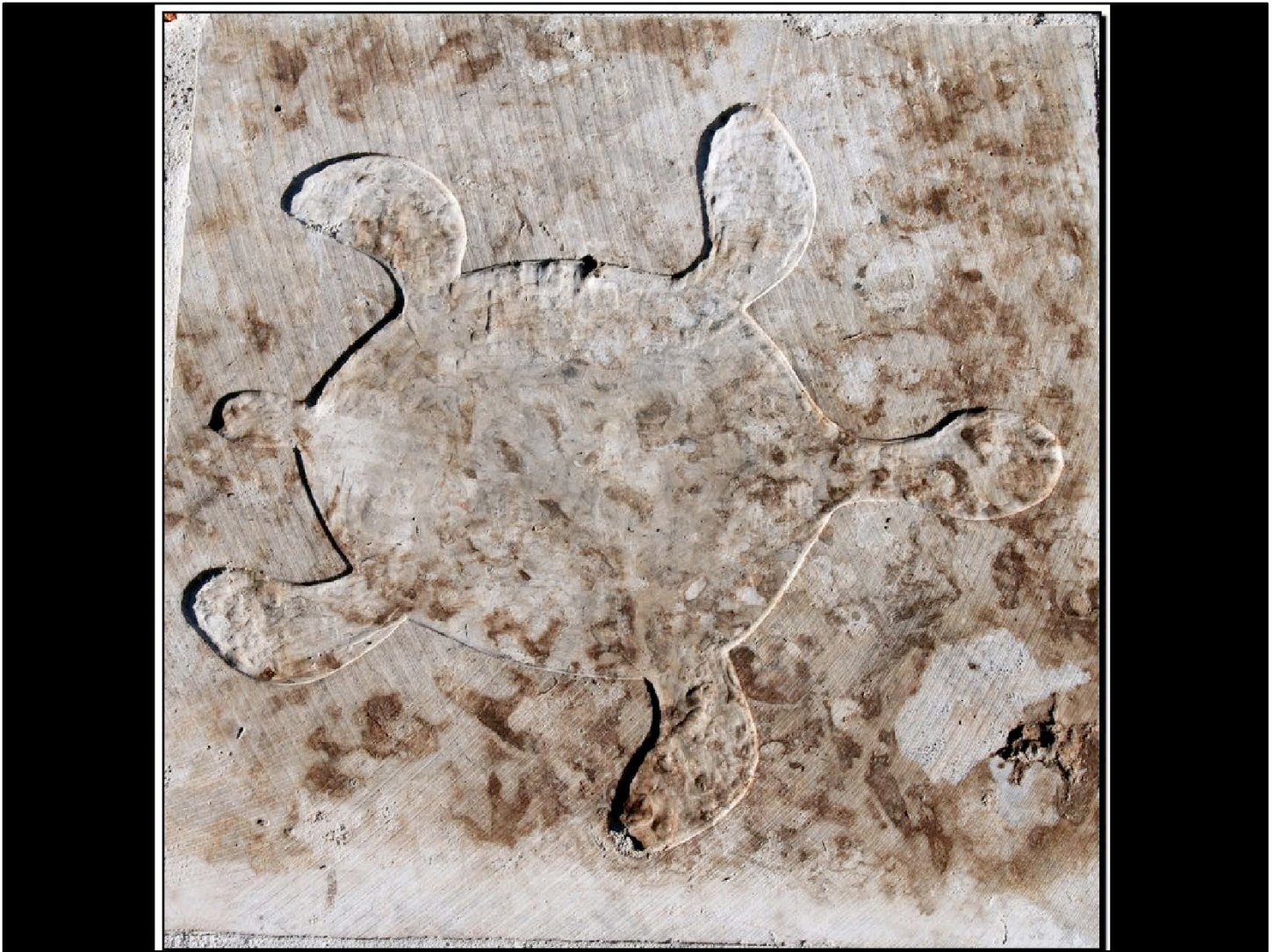
Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 22 guarantees within reason the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for our dignity and the free development of our personality.”

We have an extra responsibility to Aboriginal students because of the past 500 years of oppression during colonization in Canada, and in particular the devastating legacy of the residential schools.

WAEK Students Self-Identified Ethnicity – December 2011



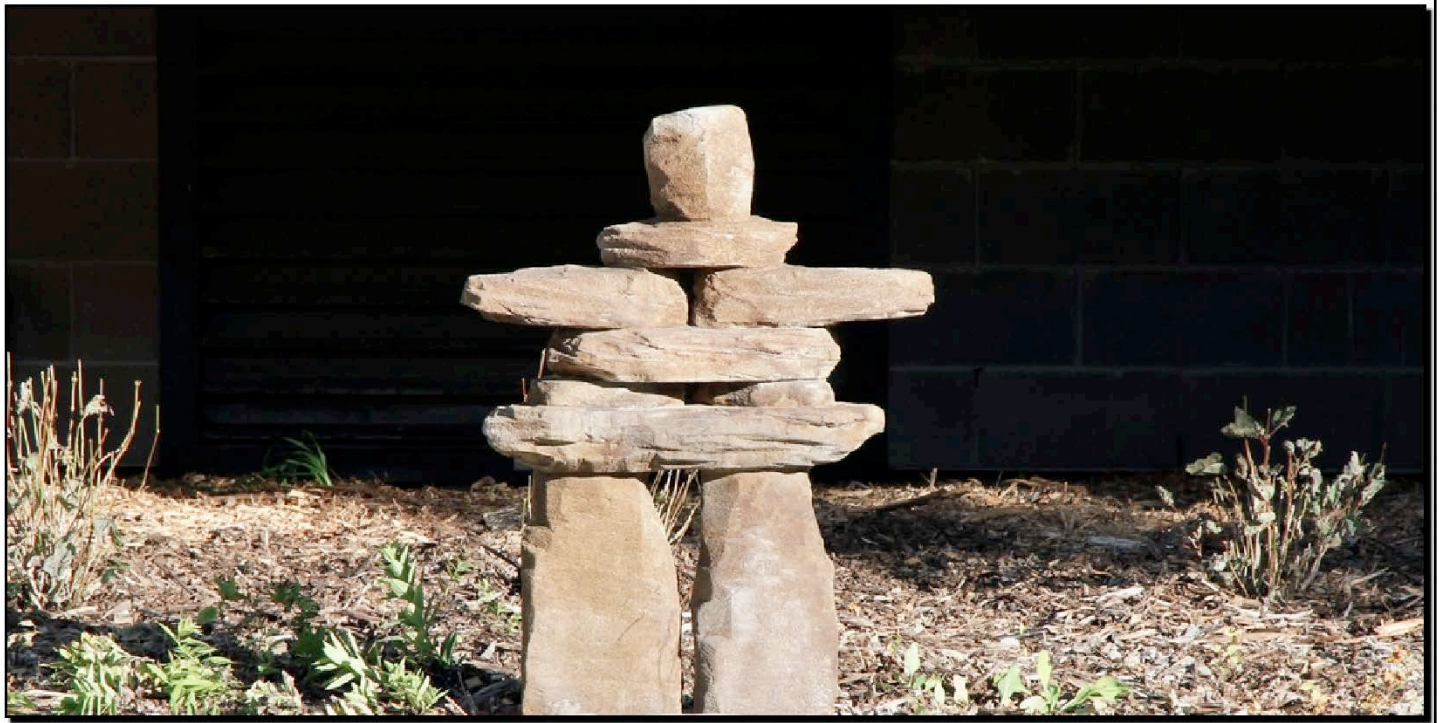
This chart gives the approximate break-down of our student population. This data was taken from a form asking students to self-identify their ethnicity in December 2011.



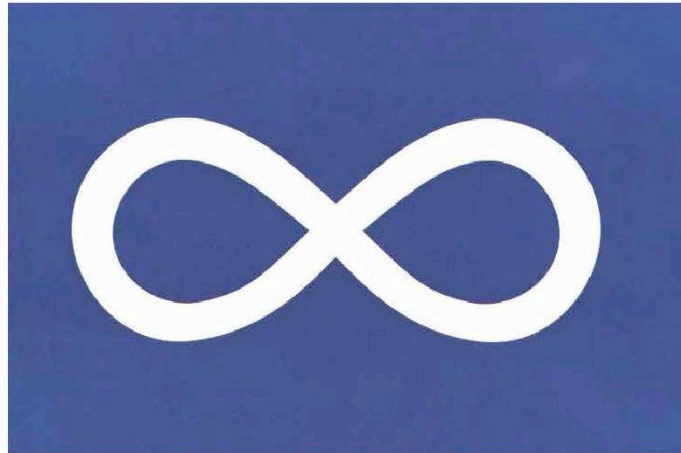
The term Aboriginal includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis People.

There are symbols in the garden to represent all three Aboriginal groups.

The turtle represents truth, and is at the centre of the garden. This can be seen to represent First Nations people.



The inuksuk represents Inuit People.



The Canadian Constitution recognizes the Métis People as one of the three Aboriginal Peoples of Canada (Métis, First Nations and Inuit). The Métis trace their roots to those of First Nations and European descent. The forging of the Indigenous and European cultures has led to a distinct culture which emanates the vibrancy and spirit of two peoples who have become one...the Métis.

The infinity symbol is often seen on the Métis flag, and with its circular path is a fitting symbol for Métis People in this Circle Garden. It represents the forging of two cultures as one, and the continuation of the Métis People forever.

The infinity symbol represents Métis people.

WAAWAYEYAA GITIKAN

Waaawayeyaa Gitikaan gakinamaagewinan, debwegendamowin shigwa miinigowiziwin imaa gakina obimaadizii ondadonaan; Anishinaabeg shigwa ingi gaagii waasa obi'ondosewaad gaye.

Owe waagaa bimaadiziwin, amii owe gakina obimaadizii gaa biminizhayang, onji nishtam e nidaawigiyan izhi onibwaagawin ogidaadiz. Gakinamaagewinan, aaniin gaabi izhichigeyang shigwa dabasenimowin e ani miinigowiziyang.

Ganiso'ondaanimag omaa aking, giwaabanda'gozimin gakina bimaadiziwin manidoog e onjiimagag.

Gichi gegoon amiinawaa owe waaawayeyaa gitikan, miho ayaawin shigwa mino bimaadiziwin imaa ji ondinamang shigwa gakina obimaadizii ji ani waabandamang shigwa ji aabajidood shawenimowin, mino wiijiwewin shigwa minaa'jiwewin.

Ono Niizhwaaso Anishinaabe Gakinamaagewinan gaa'adegin waabanong, gigii miinigowizimin ji aabajidooyang amii imaa Mino bimaadiziwin ji ondinamang. Awe Mikiinak Nookomis gaa ganawedang ono gakinamaagewinang, amii imaa aanish debwewin e onjiimagag. Debwewin biminizha'aman, amii ono gakinamaagewinan gi doondaadiz. Debwewin nasine biminizhayan.

"Niizhwaaso Anishinaabe Gakinamaagewinan" shigwa "Mitigak Gaginamaagewinang" Henry Guimond ogii ozhidoonan.

WAWIYAK KISTIKAN

Ka Wawiyak Kistikan, mina ekota ohci kiskinomakewina, kiskenihtamomakwan pakosenimowin mina e isi nahipanik pimatisiwin mistahi ka natonahkik kahkinaw anisininiwak ota kitaskinahk ininiwak, nistam ota ka ki ayacik mina mantewo-aski ininiwak pahpakan ite ka ki pe otohtecik.

Ka wawiyetamok pimoteskanaw kiskinohtaham pimatisiwi-pimohtehowin, kahkinaw kinanaw ohci, nistam ka nihtawikiyak ohci isko kehteyatisiwi-nipwahkawinihk, ekwa ekota mawaci e kistentakwak ta otinamahk, kiskinohamatowin, mina maskawatisiwin, mina tapatenimowin.

Misiveskamik isi, kiwetinohk, sawanohk, nikapeyanohk, mina wapanohk isi, mamawi kahcitinikatew kwayask mitoni tapwehtamowin kahkinaw anisininiwi-wahkomitowin kit ahcakowinahk e ohcipanik.

Mina eyakwani e isi kistentakwak, ka Wawiyak Kistikanik ohcipaniw mino-ayawin, mina ta otinikatek ekota ohci minwatisiwin, mina ayakwamisiwin, mina mino-totakewin

Anihi Kihci Kiskinomakewina, ka nokwahki Wapanohk, ki ki minikowisinaw, kwayaskitatisiwinik ta isi apachitayak. Ohkomimaw Mikiinak ka ki pimohtatat ohi kiskinomakewina ot ahcakohk, tapwewin ekota ka ohcipanik. Tapitaw natonamok tapwewin. Minototakewin pimotohtayani, ekwani kwayask e isi pimatisiyan, ka ki isi minikowisiyak anita tepakwap Kihci Kiskinohamakewinihk.

"Tepakwap Kihci Kiskinomakewina" mina "Mikiinak O Mikiwap" Ohi tapasinahikewina Henry Guimond ka ki osihtat.

THE CIRCLE GARDEN

The circle garden and its teachings resonate with the central idea of hope and opportunity so preciously sought after by all Canadians; both First Peoples and those who emigrated here from other lands.

The circular path represents the life journey of all people from the beginning of our lives through to the wisdom of all our Elders, and inherent in this is the paramount importance of knowledge achieved through education, experience and humility.

The four cardinal directions, which point to all directions of the earth, capture the central belief that all of humanity is connected through spirit.

As importantly, the circle garden is about healing and wellness, recognizing that healing can only be achieved through kindness, temperance and acceptance of difference.

The Seven Teachings, as seen in the east, were given as a foundation of a good life. It is the spirit of the grandmother turtle that has held these teachings that amount to truth. Living the truth is living the Seven Teachings. Always seek truth.

"Seven Teachings" and "Turtle Lodge" original art by Henry Guimond.

LE JARDIN CERCLE

Le Jardin Cercle et ses enseignements évoquent l'espoir et les chances tant cherchés par tous les canadiens - les Premiers Peuples aussi bien que ceux qui ont émigré ici d'autres régions du monde.

Le chemin en forme de cercle représente le voyage de la vie de tous les peuples de son début à travers la sagesse de tous nos aînés, tout en valorisant l'importance primordiale du savoir acquis à travers l'éducation, l'expérience et l'humilité.

Les quatre points cardinaux, qui indiquent toutes les directions de la terre, englobe la croyance centrale que l'esprit lie toute l'humanité.

Il est tout aussi important de comprendre que le Jardin Cercle symbolise la guérison et la santé, en reconnaissant qu'on ne peut guérir que par la bienveillance, la modération et l'acceptation de la différence.

Les sept enseignements, tels que vus dans l'est, étaient offerts comme fondement d'une bonne vie. C'est l'esprit de la grand-mère tortue qui a tenu ces enseignements de la vérité. Vivre la vérité c'est vivre les sept enseignements. Recherchez toujours la vérité.

L'art original "Seven Teachings" et "Turtle Lodge" de Henry Guimond.



Our interpretive sign includes Ojibway, Cree, English and French.



Dave Courchene Jr. advised us to place the Seven Teachings in the eastern quadrant of the garden. These provide an Aboriginal perspective on universal values, and the wording varies amongst Aboriginal nations. These teachings and the artwork were gifted to us from Dave Courchene Jr. of Turtle Lodge and the artist is Henry Guimond.



The garden honours the cultural diversity of all our students as evidenced by the four directions drumming ceremony held at the Naming Ceremony on October 5, 2011.



The ceremony was presided by Elder Dave Courchene Jr. and included speakers representing the four directions.



Two of our long-time student committee members, Harold and Marcel, talked to a reporter about the importance of welcoming all students to the circle that day.



We honour environmental sustainability in the development of the garden and at celebrations at WAEC whilst always considering the impact on the seventh generation.

Care was taken when choosing the plants. They're all indigenous to the prairies with special attention that the 4 sacred medicines be included: sweetgrass, sage, tobacco and cedar. That's sweetgrass in the foreground of this picture.



Only compostable disposable plates, cutlery and cups are purchased for school events, and we compost whatever we can all the time.



We work hard to ensure that as little as possible goes to waste. Students set up extensive sorting stations at our major events and help people sort. This photo was taken at our annual Family Literacy Fair in 2012.

STUDENT COLLABORATORS:

- Mark Courtney
- Tamara Mayham
- Jessica Root
- Chandelle Smoke-Towle
- Colinda Beardy
- Sandy Tan
- Lora Quitane
- Jennifer Cook
- Erin Weakley
- Donna Sawatzky



Family Literacy Fair 2010:
A Celebration of Diversity



The fourth and final topic of this presentation is **Helping all students make Intercultural Connections.**

The theme for the Family Literacy Fair 2010 was “A Celebration of Diversity”. Fred Penner and some students wrote a song to perform at the fair entitled “Diversity”. Notice the reference to the circle garden in Verse 3.

“There’s trouble around us, don’t run and hide
Customs and culture cannot be denied
Love, respect and courage keep our spirit strong
May the Medicine Wheel sing a unity song.”



Conclusion

And these are just some examples of how the Waaywayeyaa Gitikan initiative sustains and celebrates our school community, the environment and the economy in our diverse school and neighborhood.

Please accept our invitation to visit to take a closer look at the garden.



Works Cited

Guimond, Henry. *The Seven Teachings*. n. d. Original Art.

Penner, Fred and WAEC Students. *Diversity*. January 2010.
Song

“Priority Areas.” *Manitoba Education for Sustainable Development*. 2012. Web. 15 March 2012.

“Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Living Document.” *Canadian Museum for Human Rights*. 2012 Web. 15 March 2012.

Thank you to Photographers:

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