

# **CHILDREN OF THE EARTH HIGH SCHOOL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**



# 2024-2025

<https://www.winnipegsd.ca/childrenoftheearth>

# SCHOOL VISION

Children of the Earth aims to be an example of Indigenous Education at its best, and a school where learners thrive. We value our students for who they are, and we nurture the gifts and talents they bring. Students have opportunities for real-world learning that prepare them to share their gifts and talents with their community, using them to lead our nations with strength, wisdom, and courage. Our focus on relationship, responsibility, respect, relevance, reciprocity, and representation for all students is enhanced by the centrality of our language and cultural programming.

Children of the Earth aims to change the lives of families, communities, and future generations. The work of our school – creating leaders who can easily navigate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds – supports reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

When we look ahead, we envision a growing collective of graduates from Children of the Earth who know who they are, who know their history, and who are prepared to speak truth and seek reconciliation.



# ABOUT

Children of the Earth is an Indigenous high school, distinct in Winnipeg School Division and in the Province of Manitoba. The school was born of Indigenous grassroots activism and developed out of the need for Indigenous learners to have a school that responds to our specific cultural, language, and learning needs. In our work, we are focused on this historical dream, articulated when tobacco was passed and when ceremony was offered to give birth to the school. We understand that we work with young people who have the opportunity and responsibility to lead a strong future for Indigenous nations. We take this responsibility seriously, and carry forward with joy, love, and rigour.

**School Priorities:** (1) Indigenous languages, voices, and worldview lead our way (2) The sacred well-being of our students (3) Meaningful positive and goal-oriented relationships with families and community members (4) High quality, real-world learning



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Producing graduates who are prepared to carry our nations forward with wisdom, courage, and strength
- Passing on rich cultural knowledge and practices, and promoting acquisition and fluency in Indigenous languages
- Engaging all students in rigorous academic programming from an Indigenous perspective according to their individual interests, strengths, and needs, both inside the school and through mentorship in the community
- Engaging caregivers and community in the life of the school and supporting free access to cultural programming and ceremony
- Responding to the needs of students and families to promote consistent presence at school
- Promote a healthy lifestyle in balance with the four quadrants of the medicine wheel

## Big Picture Learning @ Children of the Earth

### INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES & CULTURAL PRACTICES

Children of the Earth is a grade 9-12 school that centres Indigenous cultural and language learning. Through participation in language classes and cultural programming, students develop their Indigenous identity, grow to understand worldviews, and practice our ways of knowing, being, doing, and becoming. Our focus on deep and rigorous learning for all students is enhanced by the centrality of our language and cultural programming.



### ADVISORY



Our students have one teacher, called an advisor, for most classes. Advisors meet daily with their group of 15-25 students to help students pursue their interests in the community and in the classroom through learning projects that build on students' strengths and talents. Advisors facilitate group discussions, run learning workshops and build strong relationships with students. Advisors also build strong relationships with caregivers and are their primary point of contact at the school. Students stay with their advisor for a minimum of two years.

### PROJECT BASED LEARNING

Students and advisors work together to plan real-world, meaningful, and cross-curricular projects based on student interests. In this way, students access the learning outcomes of core and elective courses included in the Manitoba curriculum. When students see the meaning and relevance behind what they are learning, and when their school work is work that matters in the real world, students become actively engaged in their learning and are able to make connections and develop deep understandings of their world.



### LEAVING TO LEARN (L2L)



Often, students leave the school as a group to learn in the community or on the land. These opportunities complement the work students are doing in class on their projects. L2L also offers students the opportunity to develop varied skills and knowledge, and introduces new and exciting possibilities for their future. Advisory group, grade group, and full school opportunities to leave to learn are offered.

### ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

We know that each student is an individual, and that all students come to us with their own gifts, strengths, and talents. We develop programming for individual students based on their interests in order to meet students where they're at, discover their passions, build on their strengths, and design meaningful and individual educational experiences.



### RELATIONSHIPS, RELEVANCE, & RIGOUR

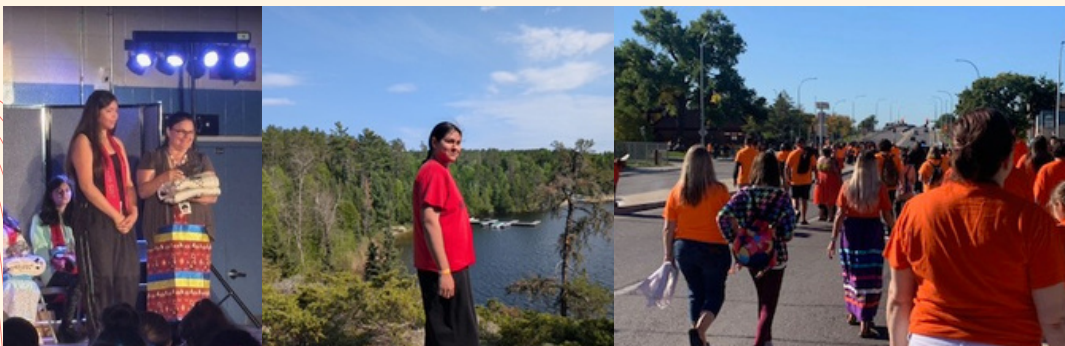


Everything begins with building strong, supportive learning **relationships**. We understand and value students' interests, passions, talents, and goals so that their educational plans are **relevant** and connected to the wider world. Designing learning experiences with these goals in mind creates a **rigorous** educational experience that allows students to deeply connect and engage with their learning both in and out of the classroom. Knowing and valuing our students, and relevant, rigorous teaching ensures their access to mino-pimatisiwin.



# PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW

- Traditional cultural ceremonies: smudge, pipe ceremony, full moon ceremonies, seasonal feasts, sweat lodge, traditional practical and spiritual teachings
- Monthly land-based learning opportunities
- Guest knowledge keepers: Wally Chartrand, Taylor Galvin, Dr. Albert McLeod, Wilfred Buck, Grace Masse, Tasha Spillett, Doug Sinclair, Kathie Jack, Chickadee Richard, Eric Courchene
- Programming every Thursday with Bear Clan and Artist-In-Residence Sheila Cailleau
- Grade 9-12 – transition to Big Picture Learning design
- Successful student internships at local agencies and businesses
- Pow Wow Club
- Regalia Design Club
- Post Secondary Club
- Spring Camp at Luther Village
- Participation in the Youth Biolab
- Driver's Education – learner permit test preparation
- Fort Whyte Farms: fall and spring
- Kitchen Brigades
- Compost Club
- Hydroponics pod construction
- Family food security support
- Hands-on learning at the Inner-City Science Centre
- Indigenous Youth Leadership Program
- Medical Careers Exploration Program
- Free student breakfast and hot lunch
- Food security support for families
- Student conferences: Red Cross Mental Health Conference, Jill of All Trades, Project 11,
- Indigenous Experiences with the Medical System interactive presentation – nursing practicum students' project
- Mobile Vision
- Solstice and Equinox Celebrations
- Immunization Clinics
- Manitoba Theatre for Young People play "Blue Beads and Blueberries"
- Official National Film Board screening of the film "Wilfred Buck"
- Regular Leaving to Learn field trips, such as: Winnipeg Art Gallery, Humane Society, Manitoba Archives, Urban Circle, Legislative Building, the Leaf
- Beading Club
- First Aid, CPR, Babysitting Certification, Food Handler's Certification, Safe Workers of Tomorrow
- MMIWG Day of Remembrance: Pipe Ceremony and Red Dress Campaign
- North End Grad Walk



# LAND-BASED EDUCATION

We made it a priority to learn on the land, scheduling one day at the end of each month for full-school, land-based learning. These opportunities included:

- Bird's Hill: We sat in circle, heard teachings from our knowledge keepers, enjoyed a feast prepared on the land, and developed community.
- Brokenhead Interpretive Trail: Students learned to make tea from harvested medicines, learned to safely build and keep a sacred fire burning, and spent time on the trail experiencing the beauty of the wetlands trail.
- Food and Medicine Gathering: organized and sponsored by Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Harvester Program, this event at Assiniboia Downs gave students and staff alike the opportunity to witness and participate in the preparation of country foods: plucking geese and ducks, skinning muskrats, and seeing demonstrations of on-the-land cooking methods. This gathering also helped students to make connections between the Indigenous languages they're learning and the land. We were delighted to see how well the students took to the traditions on display!

In the coldest months, we brought the land into the school! Students:

- made drums and shakers
- learned to butcher a deer, flesh the hide, and remove the hairs from the hide
- Listened to stories from guest Knowledge Keepers
- Participated in a round dance with guest singers and drummers

Learning Lodge: in September, we received funding from the Children's Heritage Fund to construct a learning lodge in the field adjacent to Children of the Earth and Niji Mahkwa. A fence has been installed, and when the lodge is constructed next fall, this space will be shared between our schools as a sacred learning space for all of the young people in the community.

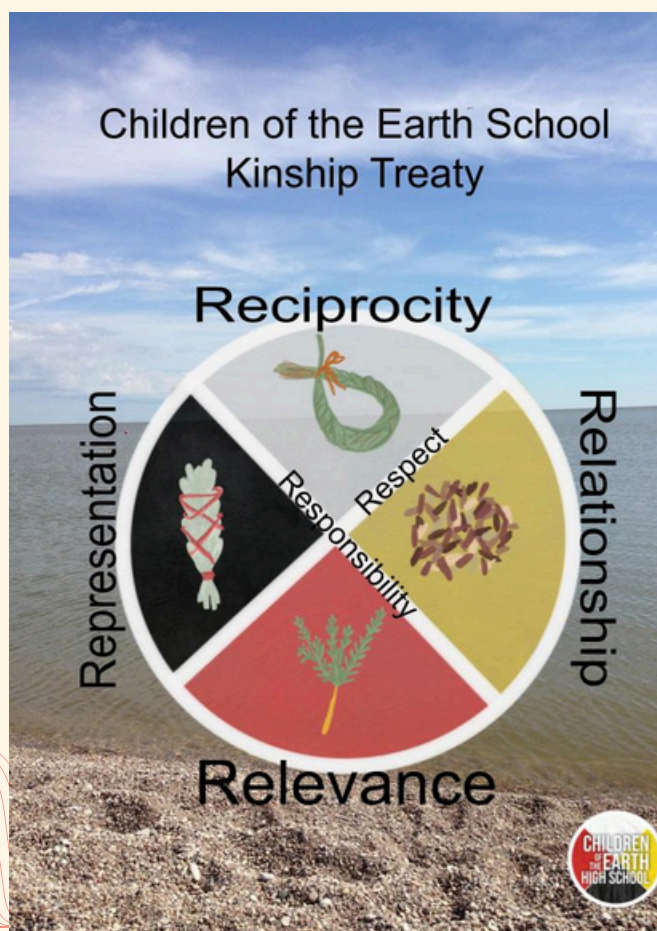


# LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Our Language courses motivate our young people to keep our ancestral languages alive.

In Ojibwe, students participated in speaking and writing the language, learning language related to their individual projects, and learning language related to Medicine Wheel Teachings. Students worked hard on their in-class assignments and were extremely proud of their individual projects. We also took students on many field trips. We are so proud of their accomplishments!

The Cree Language courses were developed this year through collaboration with great Cree teachers like Ellen Cook, Lena Cooper, and Colleen Omand, and were designed to help our young people to learn the words of Cree, their word families, relationships between the word families, and to begin an understanding of syllabics. Students are learning how a basic meaning builds on itself to have a larger meaning. For example: peyak = one; e peyakot = he is alone. Students are gaining confidence and beginning to have conversations!



## Relationship

Through cultural teachings and with support from advisors and staff, Children of the Earth students will develop and honour a relationship with themselves that extends into the stories, languages, and ways of knowing/being/living of our People. Children of the Earth staff will work with caregivers and the community to deepen our relationship with the space where our school is located.

## Relevance

Students will see themselves reflected in the learning work that they do within the classroom, expanding into community work and internships. Students will take risks with learning to help them develop the necessary skills for success.

## Representation

Students and staff will walk on Mother Earth in the ways that our ancestors show us: according to the Seven Teachings, Medicine Wheel Teachings, Natural Laws, and Ceremony. The Sacred nature of each person is emphasized and recalled to help us to solve problems when they arise.

## Reciprocity

At Children of the Earth, we will all have the opportunity to give back in meaningful ways to our school, families, and community at large through our Kinship Treaty, Knowledge Sharing, and Mentorship.

## Respect

We all have the responsibility to respect our cultural practices, Creation, and natural laws; the people within our building, our kin, and the space where we gather to learn and share. We will also develop and foster respect for our community and the people that live within it, by learning how to take care of our relatives. The Winnipeg School Division Code of Conduct will support all of us in this work.

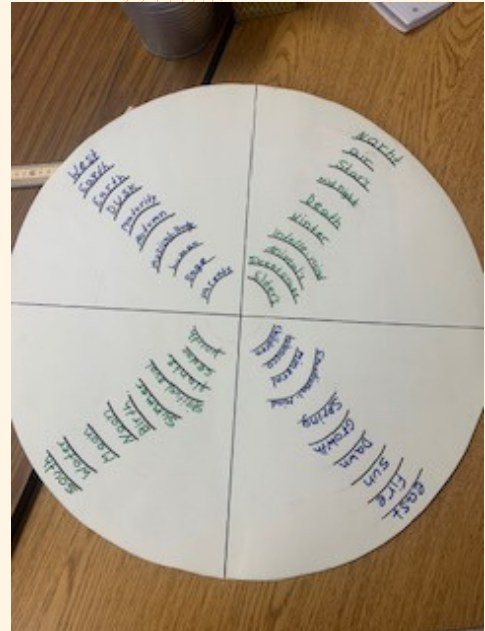
## Responsibility

We all have the responsibility to uphold each area of the Kinship Treaty. We are responsible to be present, to engage in our work, to build relationships, and to immerse ourselves in cultural practices and language. We are responsible to ourselves, to each other, to our ancestors, and to future generations.



# SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

**Project Feature: Nibi / Lake Winnipeg** The Grade 10, 11, and 12 students engaged in a cross-curricular and cross-advisory partnership to explore the ecological and cultural significance of Lake Winnipeg, with a focus on the impacts of natural resource extraction on traditional Indigenous lands and ways of being, knowing, and living. Through an integrated approach involving Science, Geography, and Indigenous perspectives, students investigated how industrial activities and Manitoba Hydro affect the lake's health and the interconnected relationships Indigenous communities have with the land and water. This learning experience fosters critical thinking, respect for Indigenous knowledge systems, and a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship and reconciliation.



**Grade 9 Programming** The grade 9 team created a dynamic and rigorous curriculum that offered engaging, hands-on opportunities for growth. Through meaningful projects, students connected with the community, contributing through service-based learning that fostered real-world impact. For example, students re-designed a website for a local not-for profit housing organization. Grade 9 students also explored composting and hydroponics by engaging in hands-on experimentation and real-world problem-solving. By managing a compost system, they gained insights into sustainability and soil health, while hydroponics taught them about efficient plant growth without soil. These projects fostered critical thinking, collaboration, and a deeper understanding of environmental responsibility, and empowered students to apply their knowledge beyond the classroom. Throughout the program, we prioritized building confidence, curiosity, self-worth, and cultural pride, empowering students to embrace their identities and develop a sense of purpose and belonging.



# SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS



**Youth in Philanthropy** This year's Youth in Philanthropy program was a vibrant initiative that empowered the Grade 9 YIP committee to engage in charitable giving and community leadership. Through hands-on experiences, students researched local nonprofit organizations, assessed community needs, and allocated grants to meaningful causes. The program fostered civic responsibility, teamwork, and a lifelong commitment to philanthropy. By involving students in real-world decision-making, it strengthened community connections and inspired future leaders. Youth in Philanthropy is more than just funding—it's about nurturing compassion, awareness, and active participation in building a better world.

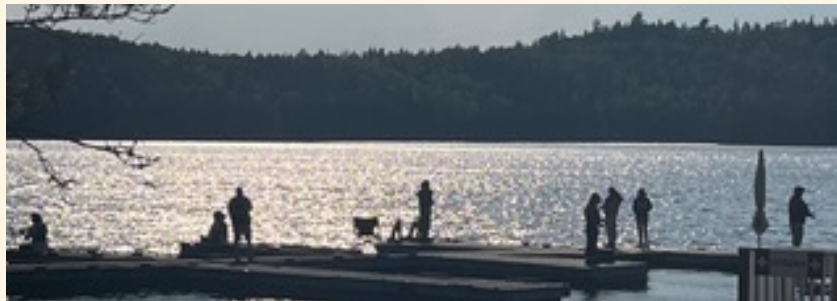
**Robotics Programming** In December, the First Nations People's Development Corporation delivered a two-week Robotics program that focused on complex coding and problem solving. Students had a lot of success in this work, gaining confidence and new skills while learning about future career possibilities and nurturing curiosities!

**Artist in Residence Sheila Cailleau** On Thursdays, Sheila provided our students with an in-house internship opportunity, where she mentored a group of students interested in textile art and design. Students started this relationship with her by participating in the "Make One, Take One" program, where two pairs of mittens are made by each student: one pair is for themselves, and one pair is for someone else in need. Students also made moccasins and pow wow belts over the course of the year, learning so much about working with textiles and benefiting from Sheila's gentle mentorship!



# PARTNERSHIPS

**School to School Partnerships** The Grade 10 Advisory cohort continued their partnership with Isaac Brock by providing tipi, drumming, and animal hide teachings; and storytelling sessions in the winter. In addition, students Tyndall Park and David Livingstone visited our school to gain a deeper understanding of the tipi. Making connections with other schools beyond our community helps all students understand the Indigenous ways of knowing/being/living and sense of community. The new Grade 9/10 Advisory cohort will continue this tradition in the 2025-2026 school year.



**Community Partnerships** Children of the Earth High School has nurtured partner relationships with a number of community organizations. This allows us to effectively offer wrap-around support to the young people in our care - d many special events over the course of the school year that brought our students, parents, and community together. We have also worked hard to enrich our existing partnerships and develop new partnerships with community resources.

**Bear Clan:** Bear Clan has been an ongoing presence in the school. Kevin, Susan, and Bear have formed strong connections with our students. Students have participated in a number of community walks, handing out sandwiches, water, and snacks to our relatives. Students have grown used to seeing our Bear Clan partners at all of our school events, even including our Spring Camp! We're looking forward to continuing to work together for the benefit of all of our young people!

**Community Education Development Association Winnipeg (CEDA):** While there has always been a connection between CEDA and Children of the Earth, we have worked intentionally to deepen this partnership, making plans for shared spaces and shared opportunities for supporting consistent presence and engagement among our students. We are so excited to see what we can do together with and for our community!

**Neeginan Education, Training, and Employment Services (NETES):** NETES generously funded our Pow Wow Club and Regalia Club this year, allowing students to enhance their pow wow dance skills and to create beautiful ribbon skirts, shirts, and dresses. We look forward to continuing our relationship and together building a robust after school program for the 2025-2026 school year!

## CONTACT US



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