



École Robert H. Smith School

Weekly Newsletter

October 5 - 9

Message from the Administrative Team

Welcome to October!

Work continues on the building a new roof on École Robert H. Smith. New insulation and roofing materials have been installed. Contractors are now installing the flashing. We hope to have all work completed in the coming week or two. Once work is completed, we will be able to use the Oak Street doors for entry for three classrooms.

On Friday, we marked National Custodial Worker Day. We are incredibly fortunate at RHS to have an amazing team, including Head Custodian Robert Zawadski, Marcario Balaswit and Bereket Hagos. They support the staff in many ways while ensuring that our building is clean and safe. Students were asked to convey their appreciation on the Friday morning announcements – yay team!

Picture Day = Monday

Picture day is Monday! Lifetouch has COVID safety procedures in place and students will be photographed individually. We are hoping to do classroom pictures in the spring! Bring your A-game smiles!

School Patrols

Thank you to our grade 6 patrols for your service in September. New School Patrol members will be staffing the intersections for the first time on Monday. To ensure the cohorts stay intact, our 4/5 classrooms will be taking on patrolling duties as a group. The training has occurred, and we have keen and conscientious students! This week is **Room 212 is on patrol**.

Positive Behaviour (PBIS)

| BE SAFE | BE RESPECTFUL | BE ACCOUNTABLE |

At RHS, we believe in being pro-active in creating a positive learning. To do that, we teach behavior expectations clearly to students that align with our central beliefs, that all RHS students should be “Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Accountable.” For example, when students are entering the building, we believe that to be respectful, we take off our hats and hoods, use a quiet voice, and put away our belongings. To be safe, we use our assigned doors, keep our bodies to ourselves, and we go directly to our classroom when entering. To be accountable, we stay in our class line, carry our equipment, and hold doors open for others. We have reminders of these expectations posted in both languages around the school. All adults who are part of the

Robert H. Community are encouraged to proactively remind students of ways to act to be respectful, safe, and accountable.

#tryliketerry – the Terry Fox School Run

In celebration of the 40th Anniversary of Terry's Marathon of Hope, École Robert H. Smith School is participating in the Terry Fox School Run. We are proudly committed to raising much-needed funds for cancer research.

Students have used our running track during school hours to conduct the run under the guidance of Mr. Donato. All funds are being collected online. Please consider sponsoring our school's effort to raise money for cancer research:



<https://secure.terryfox.ca/registant/TeamFundraisingPage.aspx?TeamID=913414>

As of Friday morning we had raised \$250.



Classroom Sound Field Systems

We are in the process of trying out a few sound field systems in classrooms. Our teachers are finding it challenging to speak through their masks all day and students have reported that it can be hard to hear their teachers. Research done on sound field systems indicate that student achievement and classroom behaviour improved with the use of this technology. We may approach PAG with a formal request for some financial support as we have 17 classrooms of students and teachers that would benefit from this innovation.

Orange Shirt Day

On September 30th we recognized Orange Shirt Day yet another opportunity to embed Indigenous perspectives and continue our dialogue about the truths of the past and our role in moving toward reconciliation. We held an age-appropriate virtual assembly and had WSD Elder and Knowledge Keeper Myra Laramee speak to all the children about love and belonging. After the younger children signed off, Dr. Laramee responded to some of the questions that our students in grades 4-6 had written to ask her.

Room 212 hosted journalist Maggie McIntyre for part of the morning on September 29th and shared their learning about the former Assiniboia Indian Residential School located in Wellington Park at the end of Academy Road.

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/orange-shirt-day-lessons-of-past-in-todays-classrooms-572581392.html>

Orange Shirt Day lessons of past in today's classrooms

By MAGGIE MACINTOSH
LOCAL JOURNALIST INQUIRY REPORTER

PROJECTED onto a classroom wall, the aerial view of Wellington Park via Google Maps — a green plot tucked between the Assiniboia River and Academy Road — is easily recognizable to Sara Thain's students.

They know the site as a toboggan hill, or as a horse field for baseball, or as a park they like just when riding along some trails in the neighbourhood. It's an approximately 25-minute walk from their elementary school in River Heights.

The nine- and 10-year-olds aren't as familiar with the ground's history as the site of Assiniboia Indian Residential High School, which operated between 1958 and 1979 as part of the federal government's educational system built to assimilate Indigenous students and destroy First Nation, Métis and Inuit culture, language and identities.

Leading up to Orange Shirt Day, recognized annually Sept. 30, Thain has led activities and discussions with her Grade 4/5 students at Robert H. Smith School about the lesser-known history of the Assiniboia plot and how residential schools operated across the country.

"The way that can make connections to what's happening in their community and I would hope that then, they might be able to access the knowledge, the stories around residential schools, in a different way that hits a little closer to home," she said during an interview at the school Tuesday.

It's not just on Thain's educational resources for Orange Shirt Day highlight the importance of Indigenous connections to the land and place-based learning.

Countrywide, Sept. 30 has become known as the day to wear orange to recognize the harm caused by the residential school system and affirm a commitment to ensure all children's lives are protected and valued.

Phyllis Webstad, who attended St. Joseph's Mission Residential School in British Columbia, is credited for creating the movement. The colour is symbolic of the orange shirt her grandmother bought her to go to school, when Webstad arrived, she was stripped of all her clothing.

Thain's Fontaine has a similar story — but with a childhood favourite Chicago Blackhawks hockey jersey. The 78-year-old, who attended both Fort Alexander and Assiniboia residential schools in Manitoba, recalls his beloved sweater disappearing when he returned to Fort Alexander after summer break one year.

"At seven years old, when you're deposited into a big stone building, away from all the love and comfort of a family, that's the most difficult thing to put a kid through. You've just everything at that point," said Fontaine, who is Assiniboia from Sagkeeng First Nation.

In 1978, Canadian broadcaster Dorcas Campbell Scott, who operates the expansion of the residential school system in the early 1980s, declared his goal was to "get rid of the Indian problem."

Students experienced physical, mental, spiritual and sexual abuse at the hands of staff at the government and church-run schools.

While Fontaine said staff "certainly tried hard to kill the Indian in this little guy," he considers his experience at Assiniboia to be "like a bunch of fresh air" compared to life at Fort Alexander.

Student experiences varied, but many came from schools that were "very violent," said Andrew Woodford, a professor of sociology and criminology at the University of Manitoba, who has researched the site.

In contrast, Woodford said Assiniboia seemed better — in part, because certain staff members came off as more caring and concerned about student well-being than previous administrators.

"It's hard to keep these two things in mind that you could have decent people trying to lessen the violence of it, but it's still a school within a system of assimilation," he said.

At Robert H. Smith, that's a challenge Thain is navigating as she teaches her students about the residential school system.

On Tuesday she showed her class a CBC news clip about Assiniboia, in which Fontaine is featured. In it, he speaks about the acceptance Indigenous students found at Assiniboia. After the viewing, her students re-

acted on the different stories they have heard about the schools.

Since the start of September, Thain said she's been exposing her students to different Indigenous perspectives and experiences. She's incorporated a book about sharing circles and its importance into her class.

"This year, my hope is that we look at history and we look at what's happening now, in a way that both recognizes the changes that have been done, the complicated events that have happened, but also celebrating the successes that Indigenous people have had," she said.

As for Orange Shirt Day, Robert H. Smith School is holding a virtual assembly today. Myra Laraman, an elder at the Winnipeg School Division, is expected to speak.

Maggie MacIntosh (@maggie_macintosh) on Twitter