

Peerless Lake students learn traditional skills

Spotlight Staff

Peerless Lake School is making significant strides to weave local culture into the curriculum for students.

The school hosted Culture Days June 4-6.

Culture Days allowed students to learn a number skills and Aboriginal traditions such as dry meat making, bannock making, fish scaling, moose hide tanning, fish scale art, tree identification and water study.

“These traditions are a part of our culture,” said Albina Alook, organizer of Culture Days and teacher at Peerless Lake School. “My father was a hunter and a trapper so I’m used to living off the land. It makes me happy to see the children enjoy learning these traditions. These traditions will help students make better connections inside the classroom.”

Josephine Okemow was invited to share her knowledge of fish scaling to the students.

“Scaling fish is the first step,” said Okemow. “They also learn about preparing a fish for cooking over a fire.”

In the dry meat making class, students learned important skills from Hilda Cardinal. Students were

taught how to properly slice the meat with a knife before it’s cooked over a fire.

Joyce Hunt, Cree Language instructor, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council, helped organize the event and teach fish scale art/Atikameg art.

Before the creative process begins, she says artists must clean the fish scales in cold water. Following that step, clothing dye is used to make vibrant colours. The fish scales are dyed in a boiling water/dye mixture. The final step is to rinse and dry the scales before they are used.

Hunt added that artists will also use bones to create beautiful patterns of floral images.

On the final day, students, teachers, parents, community members and Elders came together for a feast. The meal included fish and moose meat the students prepared.

Following the feast, everyone was treated to a special performance by three-time World Hoop Dancing champion and recording artist Dallas Arcand. He performed a few songs and demonstrated his world class hoop dancing.

The event closed with recognizing organizers, Elders, teachers and students with gifts.



World Champion hoop dancer Dallas Arcand performs at Culture Days in Peerless Lake.





Donovan Cardinal, centre, learns to scale and prepare a fish for cooking over a fire.



Peerless Lake Elders participate in the fish scale art class.



Joanelle Netowastanum proudly shows her skills in preparing the moose meat for cooking over the fire.



Peerless Lake School principal Audrey Anderson, right, watched the art of moose hide tanning.