



Water festival opens the floodgates to learning

École St. Avila to host World Water Day celebrations

Fort Richmond

BY SIMON FULLER
STAFF REPORTER

When it comes to learning about one of Earth's most precious resources, the folks at École St. Avila have been awash with education.

Throughout March, the Patricia Avenue-based school has been immersed in its Water Festival.

According to one organizer, the importance of water in the province cannot be underestimated.

"During spring especially, we tend to think we have an endless supply of water. By raising awareness, our children can learn how significant water is to our existence," said Janice Lukes, volunteer chair of the school's sustainability committee.

The month-long Water Festival has included presentations, movies and guest speakers and is intended to help students, teachers, parents and community

members understand the important role water plays in our daily lives and on the planet.

Speakers have included representatives from Lake Winnipeg Foundation — who presented Getting to Know Lake Winnipeg — and a team from Ducks Unlimited and Fort Richmond Collegiate — that presented Watersheds & Wetlands.

On March 21, the stream of learning will continue when the province will present How the Floodway Works from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The next day, the school will celebrate World Water Day, including a 1 p.m. assembly, at which students will present displays showcasing how a rain garden works. The public is welcome at both events.

The school's community is no stranger to water issues, as it's currently involved with an ongoing greening project called Down the Drain, which has included landscaping the grounds of the school and the neighbouring Richmond Kings Community Centre.

The project is focused on improving water drainage using a natural approach, where water is channeled into a rain garden, where it's absorbed and purified by native plants.

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Submitted photo

Some Grade 5 École St. Avila students with their diorama that shows how native plants clean water. From left to right: Jack, Denny, Vic, Jenna, Shloke and Claire. The school is holding its Water Festival throughout the month and will host the public for celebrations on World Water Day on March 22.

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Goal to spread awareness

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As well as plants, Grade 5 student Shloke Srivastava also knows how water impacts humans.

"We are water-powered people, because 79% of our bodies are water, so clean water is important for our existence," Srivastava said.

School principal Gordon Campbell says educating future generations about these issues is essential.

"The whole idea of conserving water is extremely important, especially in Manitoba," Campbell said. "The kids aren't aware of every issue, such as Lake

Winnipeg, so they need to be aware of the riches in this province."

LWF's secretary, Catherine Salki, said she focused her March 7 presentation on the impacts of blue and green algae.

"I talked about what a lake is and its shape and then I got into the dynamics of why the lake might be thick and showed some pictures of algae," said Salki. "The students really seemed to understand what I was talking about."

For more information about the school's greening project, visit www.pembinatrails.ca/stavila/SchoolgroundGreeningProject/index.html.