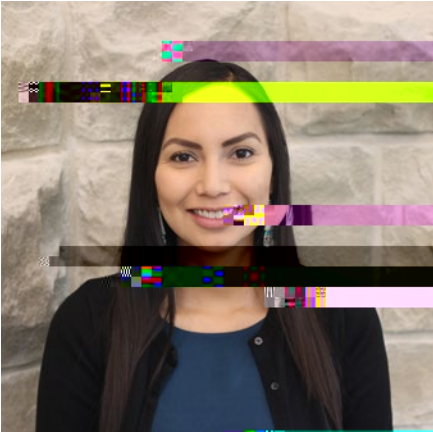


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# Letter from the Director of Community Learning & Engagement



**Angeline Nelson**  
Director of Community Learning & Engagement

Mino-Giizhigad (Good day),

As we reflect on the 2021 year, we recognize our community has continued to face the many added challenges of the pandemic. We hope that folks have stayed connected with one another and were able to access some of the programs and support out there from the many incredible community organizations.

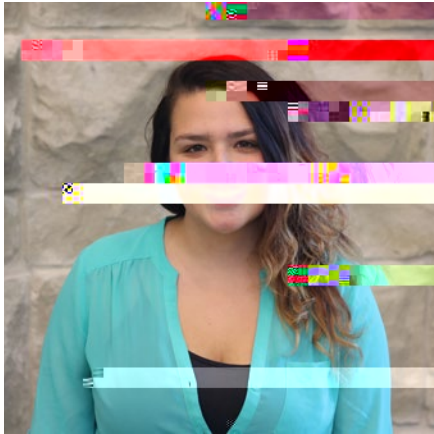
We hope that you enjoy this look back at the work of our centre and the great connections we have been fortunate to make with you and many others. While our team is small, I am proud of the growth of our programs delivered over the years in ensuring there are meaningful opportunities for Indigenous youth to see themselves in their program facilitators and volunteers. And I look forward to engaging even more youth in the years to come.

We are grateful that the University of Winnipeg has been supportive of our efforts to meaningfully engage the community in the move from online to a few in-person programs, beginning in the summer with our Indigenous STEAM camp. It has been a balance of ensuring safety precautions are in place, reducing capacity, and building partnerships to safely host children, youth, and families on campus.

As we look ahead to 2022, we remain optimistic that our programming and services will be back in full swing to once again provide the needed programs and services for children, youth, and families. Please continue to check our website and social media pages for all of the latest program updates.

– Angeline Nelson

# Letter from the Program Coordinator



**Julie Hiebert**  
*P. g a C . . d i a . .*

Boozhoo,

As the program coordinator at the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre for the last 4 years I feel fortunate to connect with so many children, youth and families in the community and on campus. Looking back at this last year, it has been a mix of online and in-person programming. We did our best to meet the needs of families and to keep people safe by delivering online programming and delivering weekly program kits. We also recognized that online programming wasn't the most accessible for some families and started hosting in-person programming once it was deemed safe to do so, ensuring restrictions and safety guidelines were followed.

As always the programs we provide and the events we host aim to be as low-barrier as possible, reaching a mostly underserved demographic. It is with the support of many community partners and funders that we are able to do the work we do. That said, I would like to acknowledge the families and parents who have been so understanding as we navigated within the ever changing guidelines throughout the year. I would also like to acknowledge the many program facilitators, students, summer leaders, volunteers, and online instructors for coming together to ensure all of our programs ran smoothly each week, and for being such great mentors.

We are looking forward to 2022 as we plan to open our computer lab once again and to deliver programming for even more children, youth and families. Please continue to check [www.uwinnipeg.ca/wiichii](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/wiichii) or our facebook page for program launches and registrations.

– Julie Hiebert

# Year In Review

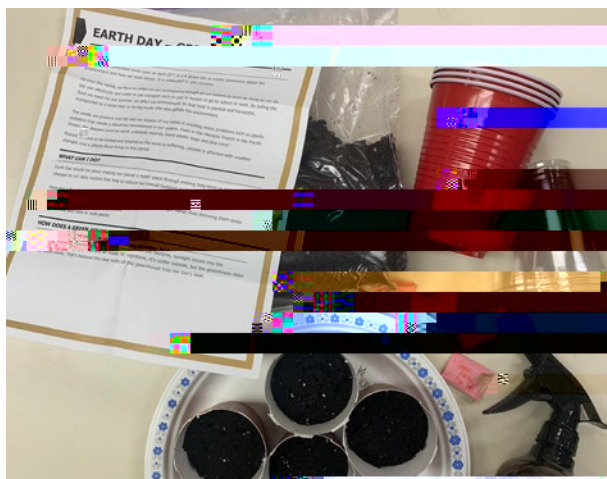
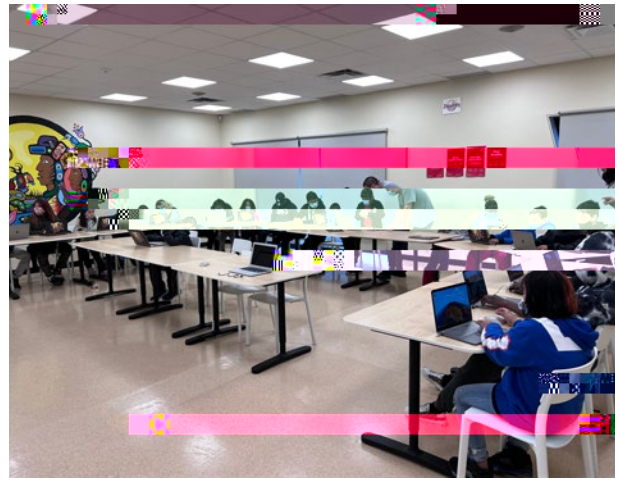
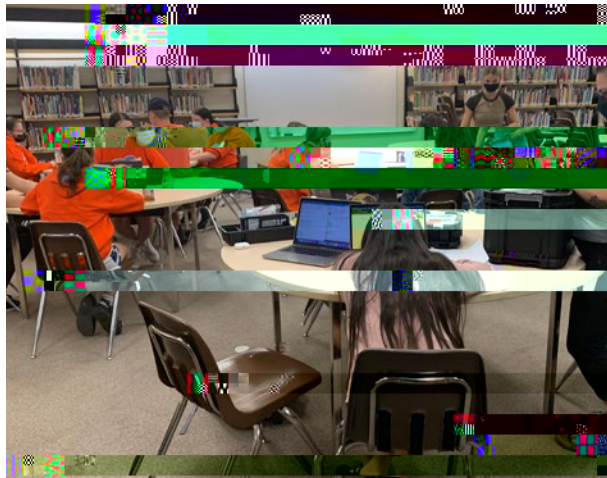
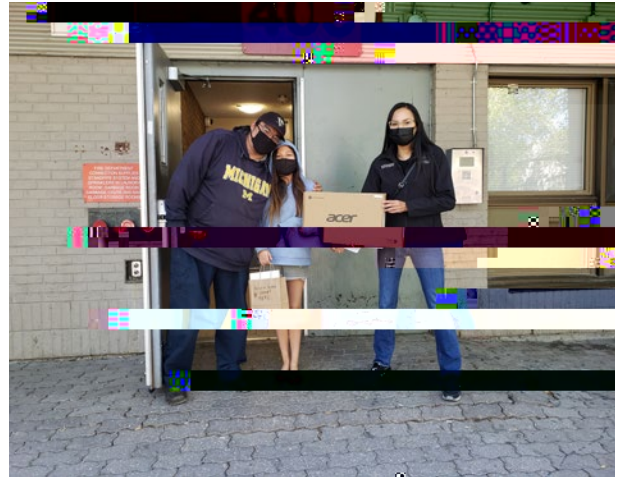
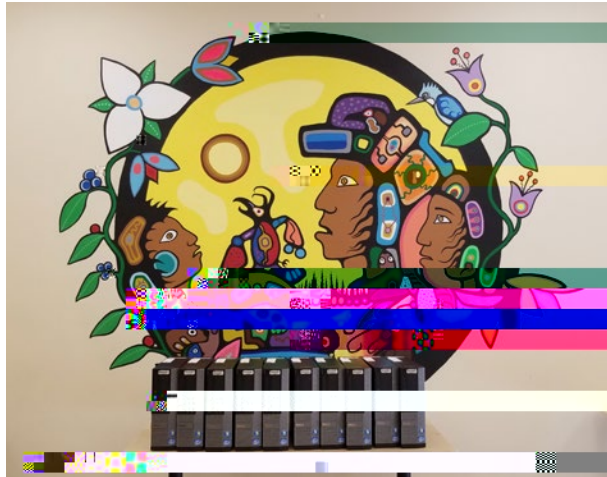
For the first half of the year, our centre continued to remain closed with most programs being delivered either online or sustained through weekly at-home program kit deliveries. Taking our learnings from 2020, we improved our online program formats, and increased our support for community members and families to have their own computer access. The following is a look back at our responses to COVID-19, how we operated online and a quick overview of how programs went as we started to host in-person programs.

## COVID-19 Responses

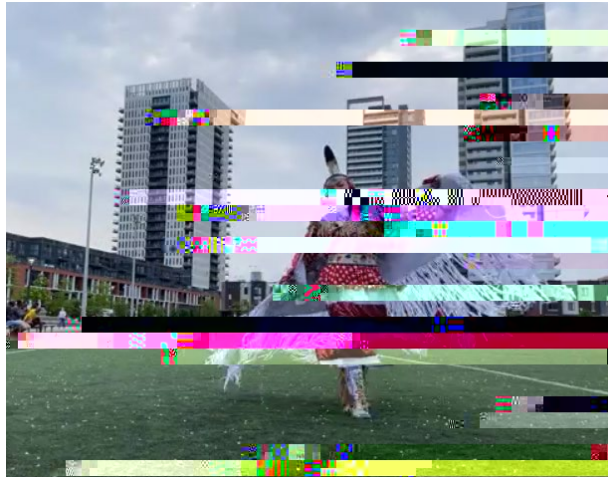
- › 28 new Chromebooks were purchased with support from the Kingfisher Foundation then distributed to assist families with the transition to online learning in May 2021. These laptops went on to assist 28 households, ultimately providing access for the 34 youth in the Building Belonging program.
- › 15 Windows 7 desktops were recycled and donated to families; 10 went to The Winnipeg Boldness Project's Parent Guide Group, and 5 went to regular computer lab users of Wii Chiiwaakanak. With the upgrade of all of the computers in our lab in late 2020, the desktops - thought to be e-wasted - were revived and donated in a partnership between our centre, The Winnipeg Boldness Project and Mother Earth Recycling.
- › 8 new laptops were also purchased with support from the Kingfisher Foundation for our laptop loan program for students in online learning.

## STEAM Activities and Workshops

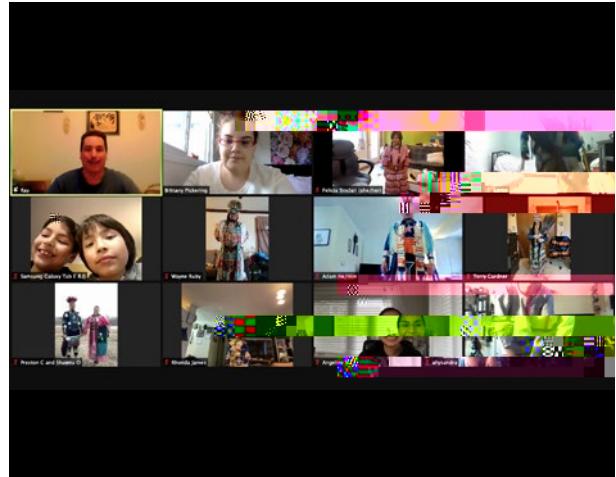
- › 7b went to regular



a) Desktop computer donations.



a)



b)



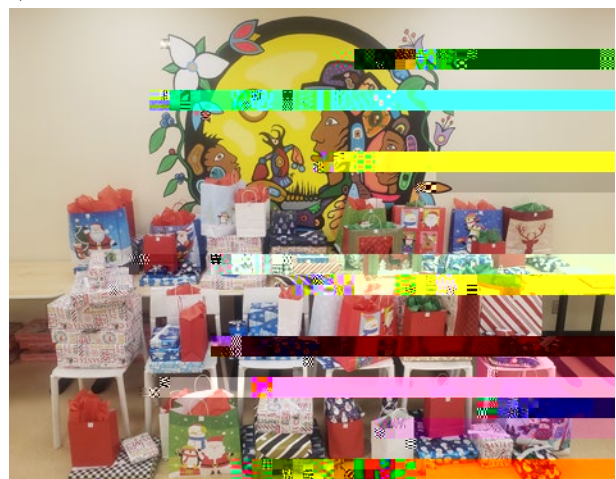
c)



d)



e)



f)

- a) Pow Wow Club online.
- c) Pow Wow Club in person.
- e) Indigenous Peoples Day at Sunshine House.

- b) Pow Wow Club on Zoom.
- d) Tikinaagan making video.
- f) Holiday dinner gifts.





# Program Overview

In addition to our core programs listed below, we also offer a variety of programs in partnership with other community organizations and workshops throughout the year. All of our programs are meant to be as low-barrier as possible; thus, they are completely free, food or snacks are provided, and transportation needs are met with bus tickets or safe rides being provided for our girls program.

A strength building project that focuses on empowering young women, girls, and two-spirit youth, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally through cultural knowledge, practices, and mentorship. The goal is to provide meaningful athletic, cultural and recreational experiences for youth that will build on their capacity to become role models, leaders and valuable contributors of the community.

Throughout the program, participants have an opportunity to engage with mentors while also developing new skills such as regalia making, self-defense, beading, Indigenous wellness, and much more.

In partnership with inner city and north end schools this program hosts grades 5 and 6 classrooms over 6-8 weekly STEAM sessions. Youth participate in activities such as building and programming lego robotics, aerospace workshops, engineering activities, and 3D computer graphics to name a few.

In partnership with the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre the team from Wii Chiiwaakanak designs and delivers new coding activities to all of the camp attendees. Our team brings our 45 programming laptops to 6 different school sites across the city to deliver the sessions to over 600 youth.

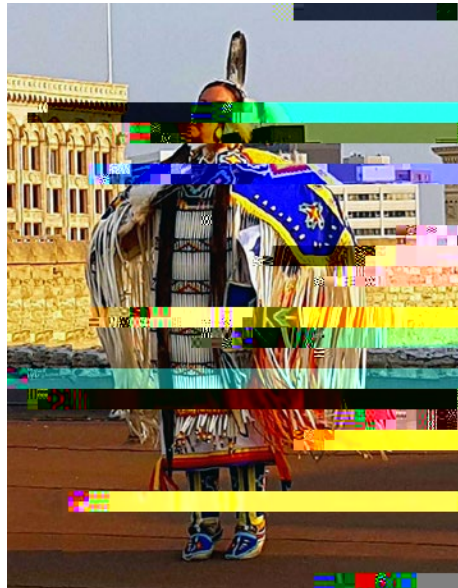
### (Science Technology Engineering Art Math)

In 2021, this summer day camp hosted 56 children and youth going into grades 1-6 on campus over two 2-week camps. Activities include hands-on experiments in labs on campus, math lessons, 3D design, multiple levels of coding, dissections, animation workshops, and more. In addition to STEAM learning, youth participate in activities that combine Indigenous knowledge with other departments at the University of Winnipeg such as Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science and Biology. Indigenous knowledge keepers share traditional knowledge about many topics such as traditional medicines, star teachings, creation stories, traditional games, feasting ceremonies, water storage and more.



# Instructor Profile

Wii Chiiwaakanak is proud to have such a knowledgeable team of Indigenous program facilitators leading our community programs to reflect the community they serve. Here is a spotlight on one of our longtime facilitators.



Rhonda James has been a program facilitator of the Sacred Seven program and co-facilitator of Powwow Club with her husband Ray Coco Stevenson at Wii Chiiwaakanak since 2013. Rhonda has been a powwow dancer and singer for 25 years and taught others about powwow for 20 years. For her work in the community she has earned the Women of Distinction Award for Culture in 2013 and the Community Award at UWinnipeg's Spring Feast in 2018.

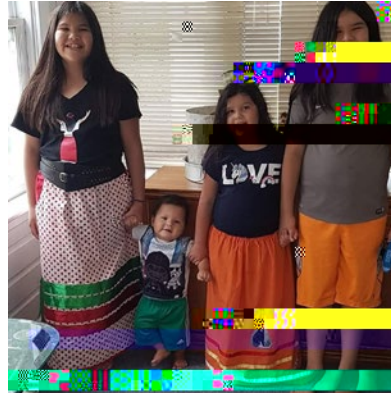
Her role as the lead facilitator for Sacred Seven has meant more than being a mentor to some of the participants in Sacred Seven, she feels like they end up becoming family. In that sense, she always puts their well-being at the forefront, is committed to addressing challenges as they arise, and shows an immense amount of compassion and kindness to everyone that attends. She teams up with the program coordinator to bring in guests to share

about traditional rites of passage, guests to talk about gender, two-spirit, and reclaiming Indigenous ways of being through crafting and language. As someone who has remained deeply connected and reconnecting to traditional Anishinaabe ways, Rhonda's role in this program is central to its success.

Understanding how Indigenous youth and family structures have been impacted, she feels this program is an important part of ensuring connections and support are available for youth that will ultimately help them as young adults. Over the years Rhonda has seen firsthand how helping young people develop skills, provide leadership opportunities, and building cultural connections is to their overall well-being. She is proud to play a role in helping young people see their own potential.

# Program Participants Voices

Wii Chiiwaakanak is a community of engaged learners of all ages. Here is one of our longtime participant's reflections on their connection to Wii Chii.



Cheryl has been signing her children up to participate in the Centre's programs for a few years now. Starting off with the language and cultural programs, more recently she began enrolling her older children in the STEAM outreach programs as well. Cheryl has four children ages 2-11 who enjoy participating in Sacred Seven, Pow Wow Club, Indigenous STEAM Camp and Regalia Making every time the programs are offered online or in person.

In 2019, she and her family started attending the weekly Pow Wow Club sessions when they lived down the street from UWinnipeg. They really enjoyed dancing together with others and the sense of community. But just before the pandemic hit MB, they moved to the North End, far from the Centre, and it became more difficult to attend every session.

When the pandemic hit in early 2020, the Centre switched to online programming which was more accessible to them, and became a great opportunity to stay connected in a moment when many were feeling isolated at home. In particular, she appreciated that facilitators and staff running the online sessions knew how to keep all participants engaged and make them feel welcome at any time, to the point of making sure

everyone had everything required for the activities, either by providing supplies or by offering equipment loans when necessary.

Cheryl and her kids, far from being tired of online activities, looked forward to the Centre's weekly programming. She balanced their screen time spent in home-schooling, with positive learning activities - like workshops - and "free time," that were beneficial for their development. "They gained a lot of skills. My daughter Leanna, she's beading and sewing, still carrying on the things that she learned in the regalia making sessions. She took the lead on making her own jingle dress while I kind of helped more with my 7-year-old to make hers", commented Cheryl highlighting the long-term impacts of the programming.

More recently, in the summer of 2020, Leanna and Bryan attended the Indigenous STEAM camp for the first time. "They loved it! They had a lot of fun and came over showing their sister what they learned and talking about the good food they ate", says Cheryl laughing. As a parent, Cheryl appreciates the programming for the ways in which it adds to her children feeling proud to be Indigenous; learning more about the language, culture, and being a part of a community.

# Program Volunteer Voices

Wii Chiiwaakanak partners with multiple programs to host volunteers for work experience or service learning hours. Here is a bit about some of our volunteers and their invaluable contributions to the work of the centre.



(Pictured left to right)

Melissa, Gracie, and Cassidy are all current and former members of the (.ca)SES) Canadian Indigenous Science and Engineering Society UWinnipeg chapter. This past year they have all worked with our team at Wii Chiiwaakanak helping to deliver coding workshops as part of the Adventure Kids Camp. They traveled to six different schools throughout the summer teaming up to deliver sessions to over 600 youth.

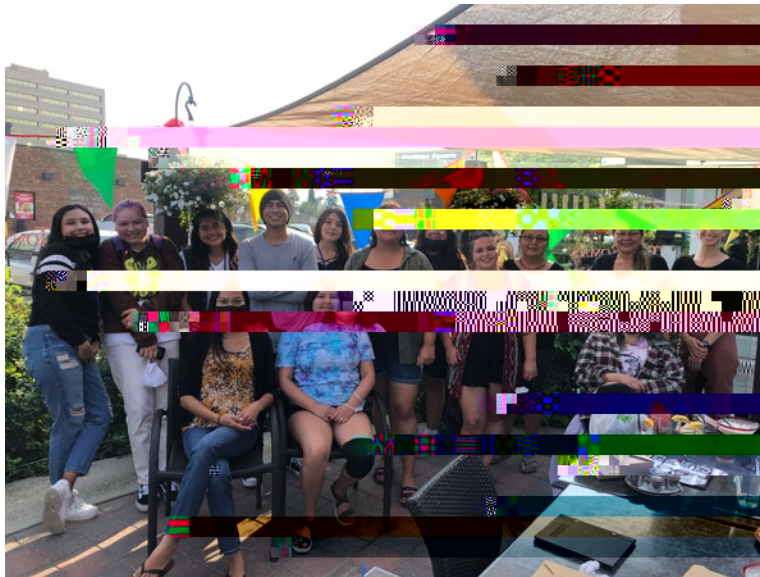
As Indigenous STEM students connecting with other youth - Indigenous and non-Indigenous - is an important part of their own journeys as they all recognize the many mentors they had that have helped them along the way. They also

recognize the importance of underserved communities being represented in their teachers and enjoyed having the opportunity to gain experience and connect with so many young people over the summer.

Melissa, is Cree from Fox Lake Cree Nation who earned her Bachelor of Science from UWinnipeg and is now a Masters student at the University of Manitoba studying biomedical engineering. Gracie, is a member of the MB Metis Nation and a second year biology student at UWinnipeg with the goal of applying to medical school. Cassidy, a proud Metis student and third year Biochemistry student also has goals of applying to medical school.

# Program Partnerships

Wii Chiiwaakanak partners with multiple community organizations each year to build leadership opportunities and to broaden our reach. Here is a spotlight of one we are so proud to have had this year.



In the summer, the Community Education Development Association became one of the Centre's newest community partners, specifically with the Indigenous STEAM Camp. Hosting nine students over the summer and seeking in-person community-based learning experiences for their students, their community organizer Alana Ollinger reached out. Moving on short-term notice to host the camp in-person, their team was able to join us for one week of leadership training followed by two weeks as mentors of the Indigenous STEAM Camp.

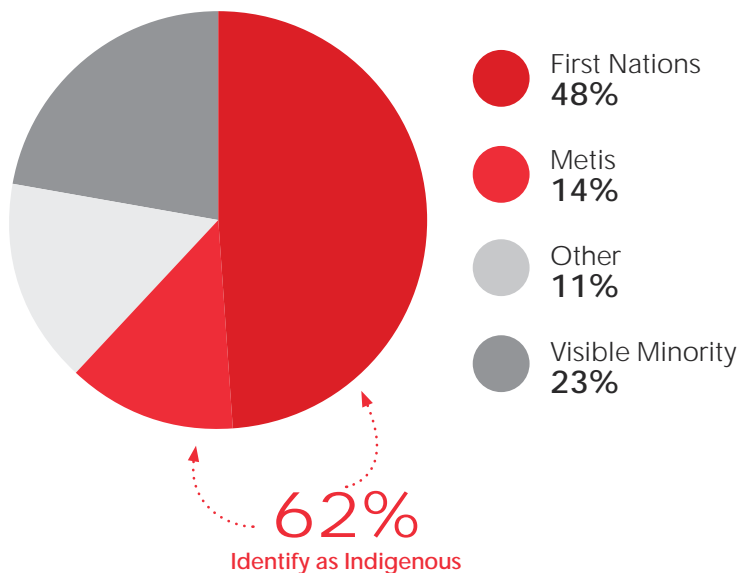
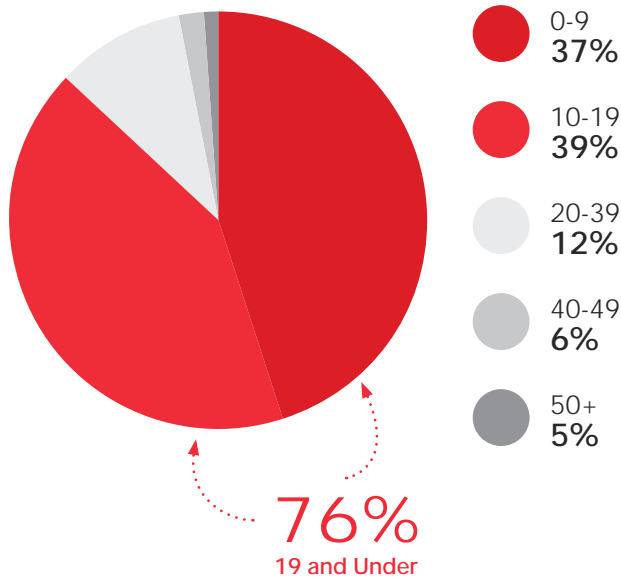
Collectively, their group of 10 - two of whom were joining as senior leaders - played an invaluable role proving to be instrumental in connecting with the 56 youth served in the camps. Split over two sites they worked with small groups of youth, helping them with each activity throughout the camps, helping to keep everyone safe on outings, and demonstrating leadership qualities by example despite being many of the student's first work experiences.

Alana shares that they had an amazing time learning from the two teachers, Mrs. Gail Lakatos and Mrs Josie Hartin, and the many guests who brought STEAM programming from Indigenous perspectives to life. They also learned so much from the children they worked with in the program. She adds, "our students developed leadership and teamwork skills, learned how to work with young people, and had a ton of fun supporting the camp! They also learned a lot about themselves: their gifts and strengths, and about their own culture through the teachings of the many guests and the teachers."

For one of the mentors, after her experience in the STEAM camp, she realized that she wanted to become a teacher. In October she applied to the Winnipeg School Division's Build From Within - Ozhiton Onji Peenjiiee Program, a program that supports Indigenous High School Students to become teachers. She recently found out that she was accepted to the program and will begin her journey to become a teacher in fall 2022!

# Our Year In Review

(Total Users: 995)



25

Indigenous Program Facilitators

13

Different Programs

2,867

Visits to our STEAM Programs

2,028

Visits to Language and Cultural Programming










650

Visits to our Community Support Events and Programs

55%

of Visitors Identify as Female

# Our Funders

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Kingfisher Foundation</p>  |   |  |
|  |  |  |
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# Our Partners

- › University of Winnipeg Foundation
- › Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre
- › SNA's Building Belonging Program
- › Aabijjiwaan New Media Lab
- › Community Education Development Association
- › Sunshine House
- › UM Max Rady College of Medicine Service Learning
- › Niji Mahkwa School
- › Canadian Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (.caISES) UWinnipeg chapter
- › Kani Kanichihk Heart Medicine Lodge Program
- › Indigenous Languages of Manitoba, NCI, Mazinaate Publishing, Oral History Centre, and Office of the Indigenous Academic Lead for the Ojibwe Radio Language Program Aakoziwigamig





