



## Community Engagement Initiative - Youth Leadership Workshop

By Danielle Cherpako, Social Connectedness Fellow 2019

My community engagement initiative took place in Misipawistik Cree Nation.

I partnered with the Misipawistik Pimatisiméskanaw Land- Based Learning Program, the program coordinator, Becky Cook, and Celine Thomas from the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness, to deliver a 1 day leadership workshop.

Celine and I visited Misipawistik from June 23<sup>rd</sup>- June 27<sup>th</sup>, and the workshop took place on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A total of 11 youth participated in the program, and about 25- 30 Elders and other community members were present.

The workshop began with us asking youth to reflect on their own skills and goals, and finished with us asking them to collaborate and design their own community engagement projects.

When designing the workshop, it was important to emphasize to the youth the benefits of working together as a community. While western culture often idealizes individual accomplishments and skills, Indigenous cultures often prioritize community and working together. Celine and I wanted to design the workshop with cultural relevance in mind.



In the first exercise, youth were asked to close their eyes while I asked a series of prompting questions which asked them to visualize their lives five years in the future. I then had the youth open their eyes and draw what they thought their lives might be like.



In the second exercise, youth were divided into two groups, and each group was asked to create a community engagement initiative project idea on poster paper. They then presented the project idea to the Elders and other community members who were present.



## Learnings for my Research

The leadership workshop allowed me to connect with the youth and to get to know them better, while also learning about important issues in the community. After the workshop, the youth felt more comfortable talking with me, and they shared their opinions and experiences in regard to the Land- Based Learning Program.



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## Benefits for the Youth

During the self-reflection exercise, youth had very positive goals for themselves in the future. Many of them expressed wanting to pursue further education, and wanting to have a family. One of the youth talked about being a fisherman on Lake Winnipeg with his siblings, and providing for his father, as his father had provided for them.

The youth had two community engagement ideas, both of which would benefit their community. The first group wanted to host a school- wide sports tournament for their peers, because they identified sports as a positive way of building community connectedness.

The second group wanted to bring Elders and young people together for 3 days of activities, such as singing, dancing, beading, and making bannock. They expressed that learning from the Elders during the program was so much fun that they wanted this to continue.

After hearing the youth present their community engagement ideas, the Elders expressed that it was wonderful to see the youth interested in making a positive difference in the community.