



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WINNIPEG

# **Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre**

Annual Report 2020

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# Letter from the Director of Community Learning & Engagement



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

Aniin,

As we begin this new year, we recognize that it has been extraordinarily difficult for many of us in our communities. We hope that you have stayed well, stayed healthy, and found the connections you need to get through this together.

Winter is a time for telling stories and this report is a story of the year we have had at the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre. Despite the many challenges we all faced, we found a way to connect with one another through our language, culture, and programming grounded in our fundamental desire to learn and grow.

We are grateful to all those who participated in our programming, to our facilitators for continuing to teach and lead, and to our funders for supporting this important work. We remain committed to providing learning opportunities for many in this upcoming year. Please check our social media profiles and website for the most up-to-date programming information.

As we find new ways to connect and engage during the pandemic we hope that you will look to us to support your learning, development, and connection in 2021 and beyond.

– **Angeline Nelson**

# Letter from the Program Coordinator



**Julie Hiebert**  
*Program Coordinator*

Aniin!

As the programming coordinator for Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre, I can attest we have been working hard to continue to offer the programs and services you enjoy participating in while making sure that everyone is safe and continues to be healthy.

Our computer lab and classroom have undergone some transitions to allow for social distancing when we can safely open. As public health recommendations change, we will make adjustments for any possible in-person activities.

We recognize this has been a very hard year and we look forward to seeing you soon. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we made the pivot to online programming.

Please check [uwinnipeg.ca/wiichii](http://uwinnipeg.ca/wiichii) for any updates to program times and locations.

We are excited for the range of programming we will offer this winter and are hoping for another busy spring and summer full of learning!

– Your Wii Chii Program Staff

# COVID-19 Response

Although the Centre is not physically open and is not receiving the same funding we normally do throughout the year, our team has continued working to make the lives of families in our programs a little easier, especially during this crisis. Transition to online programming – both with core programming and new program development – continues to take place and has been both a learning opportunity for us as a team, and an important part of supporting families and youth to overcome these unprecedented times.

## Transition to Online Learning

- › 34 laptops were purchased and/or refurbished and distributed to support families with the transition to online learning. Our team reached out to families within our programs to identify their needs. While doing so, Indigenous success coordinators at schools in Winnipeg reached out for assistance in acquiring laptops to support Indigenous high school students.
- › 5 of the programming laptops were lent to post-secondary students
- › 7 programming laptops were lent out to support online programming and additional camera equipment was acquired to support programming in 2021
- › Video games consoles previously provided for STEM learning opportunities were donated to Rossbrook House to create more individual game stations and allow for social distancing.

## Funding and In-Kind Support to Partner Community Organizations

- › Supporting other organizations that were able to remain open in the early part of the pandemic was an important way to assist with the increased needs placed upon organizations. A total of \$4,900 was provided to Rossbrook House to cover the costs of providing dinner in July and August for children they serve; and \$3,000 was provided to Sunshine House to cover a portion of the costs for their weekly hamper deliveries.
- › Our team volunteered as drivers for other organizations who were providing contactless deliveries to homes in the area, and helping with community feasts. We assisted Sunshine House with their community feast in mid-May – mostly with the cooking, preparing meals-to-go, and cleaning up. Our program coordinator assisted with the weekly food deliveries.

## Family Supports

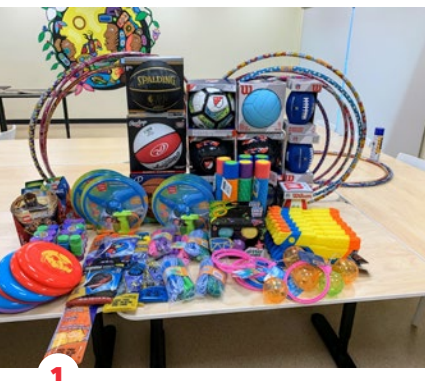
### *Hampers and personal protective equipment*

- › Essential items like hand sanitizers, emergency food, etc. were purchased and provided as the need from organizations was seen, heard, and responded to.
- › Supplies and funds were provided to individuals who made 300 reusable face masks for community organizations like Mama Bear Clan, Sunshine House, and North End Women's Centre in the early weeks of the pandemic when it was still difficult to acquire.
- › Sporting equipment to support 40 families through Spence Neighbourhood Association were donated with games for families and dozens of books for young learners in late spring and early summer. <sup>1</sup>
- › 3 boxes of books were donated to a local book drive hosted by a local elementary school
- › Dozens of winter gear sets, such as toques, gloves, and scarves were also donated to North End Women's Resource Centre.

## Youth Supports

### *Cultural/educational kits*

- › 3 instructional videos on regalia making in Anishinaabemowin were released. Through our 2019-2020 language funding these videos were developed with Indigenous artists on how to create regalia such as Ribbon Skirts, Moccasins, and Applique. Dozens of kits were then delivered to the homes of participants to follow along with the videos. <sup>2</sup>
- › Our team delivered educational STEAM activities as a part of WASAC's Adventure Kids Camp in continuing our longstanding partnership. Two teams were able to safely facilitate activities to 560 students as a part of their camp. Pre-Covid we would normally facilitate workshops to over 1600 students in the summer. <sup>3</sup>
- › This summer, 50 backpacks filled with school supplies, were provided in the first week of September. Traditionally, our Indigenous STEAM Camp gets 60 kids ready for back-to-school – both educationally and with all the supplies they need.
- › 25 STEM-based learning kits for Spence Neighbourhood Association were developed, assembled and delivered in December with plans to continue in the new year. This was an excellent substitute for our regular in-person Science Explorers Program.
- › A new online radio program in Anishinaabemowin was developed in partnership with ILM, NCI, the Oral History Centre, the Academic Lead, UM, and Mazinaate Publishing. It is a 12-episode radio drama program aired every 2 weeks on NCI with a large cast of Ojibwe language speakers. Language lessons accompany each episode which is made available on [www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/aakoziwigamig.html](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/aakoziwigamig.html)





## Community Holiday Dinner

- › Every year, Wii Chiiwaakanak celebrates the holidays with community by hosting an annual holiday dinner on campus. Our partners – Les Marmiton and Diversity Food Services – as well as donations and volunteers from The University of Winnipeg staff and faculty help make this a bigger event each year. The in-person event hosts 200 – approximately 120 of whom are children 17 & under – with a full traditional turkey meal, 5-8 activity stations, a photo booth, entertainment, and gifts for every child 17 & under.
- › With code red in place, the Centre and our community partners felt this was an important event that we had to make happen. Our partners came together again and helped us to deliver 200 holiday meals prepared by Diversity, 84 toys, and 80 family activity kits. Les Marmiton and so many other wonderful people donated to make this dinner happen. Les Marmiton also volunteered as drivers – helping us to deliver the meals, toys, and family activities across the city.



**200**

Holiday Meals



**84**

Toys



**80**

Family Activity Kits



# 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.

## Sacred Seven

A strength-building project that focuses on empowering young women and girls physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally through cultural practices of traditional pow wow dancing and crafting. 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 to the community.

Throughout the program, participants have an opportunity to learn new skills such as regalia making, self-defense, beading, Indigenous wellness, and much more.

## So you want to be a YouTuber?

Geared towards kids ages 9-12, this program is led by an Indigenous multimedia artist. The program teaches the basics of storyboarding, video production, and editing. Each participant develops and creates their own video with help every step of the way. A laptop with the needed software is loaned to make this program accessible to kids to participate in the program from home.

## Learning Anishinaabemowin

This weekly cultural program provides parents, children, and individuals of all ages with a chance to learn the Ojibwe language. Language resources are provided to participants. Generally, each instance of this program accommodates 40 people either in-person or online to allow for more interaction with the instructor.

## Indigenous STEAM Camp

*(Science Technology Engineering Art Math)*

This summer day camp for children and youth going into grades 1-6 is hosted on campus where youth participate in activities that combine Indigenous knowledge with learning from departments at The University of Winnipeg (such as Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science and Biology). 60 children participate in the two 2-week camps. 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. Activities also include hands-on experiments in labs on campus, math lessons, 3D printing, coding, dissections, as well as weekly field trips.

## Women's Self-Defense

This self-defense class for female identifying participants aged 12+ uses Jiu-Jitsu techniques to teach participants valuable self-defense skills, covering common escapes and movements effective to help individuals have a stronger sense of personal safety. A guest instructor also assists in understanding the current laws in Manitoba.

## Pow Wow Club

Pow Wow Clubs is an intergenerational program to learn about pow wow dancing, songs, and the history and teachings behind them. There are six dance instructors who each dance different styles along with a singing instructor. Families are encouraged to participate together.

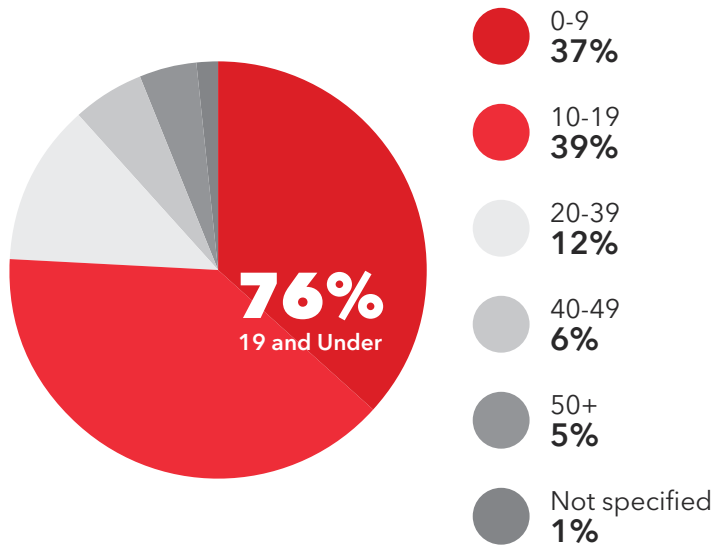


# Our Year In Review

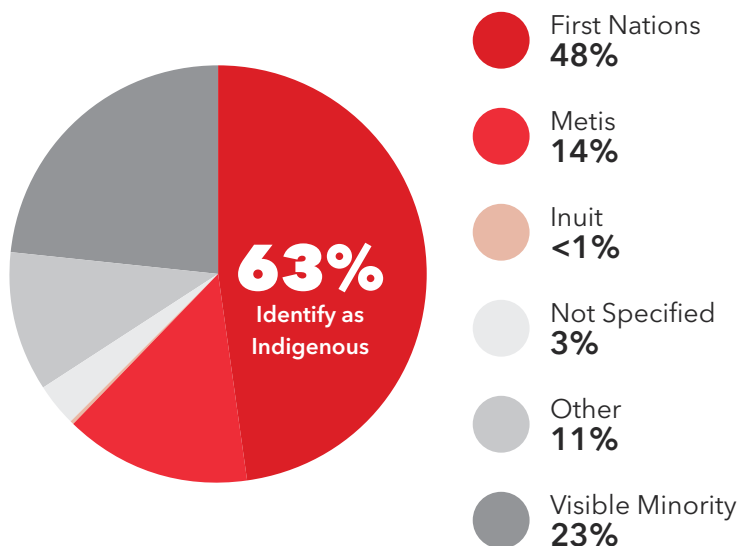
## Who uses Wii Chii?

(Total Users: 836)

### Age Range



### Ethnicity



**23**

Indigenous Program Facilitators

**17**

Different Programs

**1,541**

Visits to our Technology Access Lab  
(Closed March 13 due to COVID-19)

**3,179**

Visits to our STEAM Programs

**2,187**

Visits to Language and Cultural Programming

**778**

Visits to our Community Support Events and Programs

# 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 an example of one of our longtime facilitators.



## Jason Parenteau

Jason has been a self-defense instructor at Wii Chiiwaakanak for five years and leads the Women's Self-Defense program. Jason is a proud husband and father who has earned a Black Belt in Jiu Jitsu from the Sylvio Behring Association. Jason graduated from the Anishinaabe Educational Institute and works to share language and culture with families and youth. Jason began his own martial arts journey when his eldest son enrolled in classes at Red Road Ogichidaa Martial Arts. Jason quickly developed a passion for learning and teaching martial arts and believes that all people should feel safe and be able to defend themselves. Knowing that many Indigenous peoples have been impacted by MMIW2S (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Two-Spirit people and Girls) he believes that the martial arts can provide important skills in our community.

Jason believes that physical and mental health are linked and important areas to focus on. Although he has helped many program participants gain the fundamentals of self-defense, there is one story that stuck out to him. A past participant who took part in the women's self-defense program found herself in a very difficult domestic violence situation but was able to leave.

"Knowing that this woman was able to get out of a very dangerous situation with her children quickly made me want to continue to teach more women these skills." Jason leads this course each year and also is an instructor at the Roseau River Jiu Jitsu club in Roseau River.

*I have seen a lot of growth in my students. Not only are they physically stronger and healthier but they are mentally engaged and more aware of their surroundings.*

# Program Participants Voices

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



## Rose

Rose has been a participant of programming at Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre for over seven years. Rose has been an active member of the Sacred Seven program, focusing on the hoop dance. The program offered a place for Rose to learn skills to help her navigate high school and she became a graduate of St. James Collegiate. She appreciated beginning each session with a sharing circle and was inspired to give back by volunteering in the community. Rose appreciates the many different kinds of workshops that she is able to be a part of, including her favourites-beading and self-defense. Besides being a part of Sacred Seven, Rose is a regular at Pow Wow Club.

Although she has been a pow wow dancer since she was six years old, Rose enjoys being able to practice and learn more about pow wow dancing throughout the year. Through her involvement in Pow Wow Club, Rose has been able to dance at several different public events sharing her gift with many.

"Wii Chii is a place where you can feel welcome and learn a lot about yourself." Rose has made lifelong friends through her participation in the programs here at Wii Chii and encourages you to join her to dance at the Pow Wow Club.

*Pow Wow dancing is a big release for me. It is a time when I can let my worries and stresses go and just feel the music.*

# Program Participants Voices



## Shaneen

Shaneen is from Dominion City and has been living in Winnipeg since 2014. Shaneen began to take Anishinaabemowin classes at Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre three years ago. Although she was not raised with the language, Shaneen believes it is important to learn her language and looked for opportunities to take classes in Winnipeg. Shaneen found the language learning environment at Wii Chii to be very welcoming.

Shaneen says that the class size and the hands-on approach of the instructors means that students get to be helped wherever they are at on their language learning journey. Shaneen regularly meets other people who want to learn the language and tells them to join her at the Wii Chii classes. Shaneen says that she has made friends who share her love of learning Ojibwe.

"We have great teachers at Wii Chii who help us learn more each class. Come learn with us!"

*I want to keep learning my language and these classes have helped me learn so much over the past few years.*

# Program Volunteer Voices

Wii Chiiwaakanak partners with multiple programs to host volunteers for work experience or service learning hours. Here is a volunteer's reflection on their connection to Wii Chii.



## Stacy McDermid

Stacy is from Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation, Ontario and is a second-year medical student. She has been with Sacred Seven for 1.5 years. The program has played an important role in her personal well-being and learning. She loves that it provides a sense of community and culture, a home away from home.

"Rhonda is a fantastic mentor and role model to the girls including myself. You can clearly see there is a strong connection between her and the participants; Rhonda has taught me a lot from watching her interactions with the girls. She is kind, caring and nonjudgmental. They trust and respect her guidance. As a medical student, and future family physician, it is how I see myself practicing medicine."

The Centre works with participants to implement activities which align organizational goals and participant interest. For example, the participants of Sacred Seven expressed interest in learning their Ojibwe language. And because of their request, the program facilitator ensures that they learn two new words each session.

As well, the organization is very flexible and quick to act based on participant needs. From time to time, guest speakers are brought in to address ongoing life events. On short notice, the program facilitator arranged for someone to speak about the traditional rites of passage for women and how to address those awkward moments.

"I was very impressed with the speaker's presentation, warmth, openness and ability to convey a message. This type of mentorship is invaluable to any youth's development. The facilitators empower the participants to take the lead in a session. For example, the girls will choose an activity of interest such as baking or slime-making and lead the class through a step-by-step process. I had the opportunity to lead beading classes and will lead a class on crafting medicine pouches. It is easy to see how beneficial this program is to the community and I am going to stay connected to the program moving forward."

*It is easy to see how beneficial this program is to the community and I am going to stay connected to the program moving forward.*

# Our Funders



**Jennifer Roblin & Friends**

**Kingfisher Foundation**

**Anonymous Donors**



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